GAMECUBE • DS • GBA • REVOLUTION

NGC

ISSUE #119
MAY 2006 / £3.99
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ZELDA!
LINK ARRIVES ON DS

INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING



NEW SUPER MARIO BROS.

The greatest Mario game ever? Find out inside...

REVIEWED!

TETRIS DS

- Bricks and sticks and ten-player action!



POSTERS!

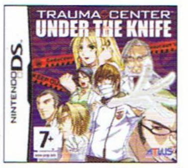
- Super Mario and Odama artwork

PLUS!

ANIMAL CROSSING

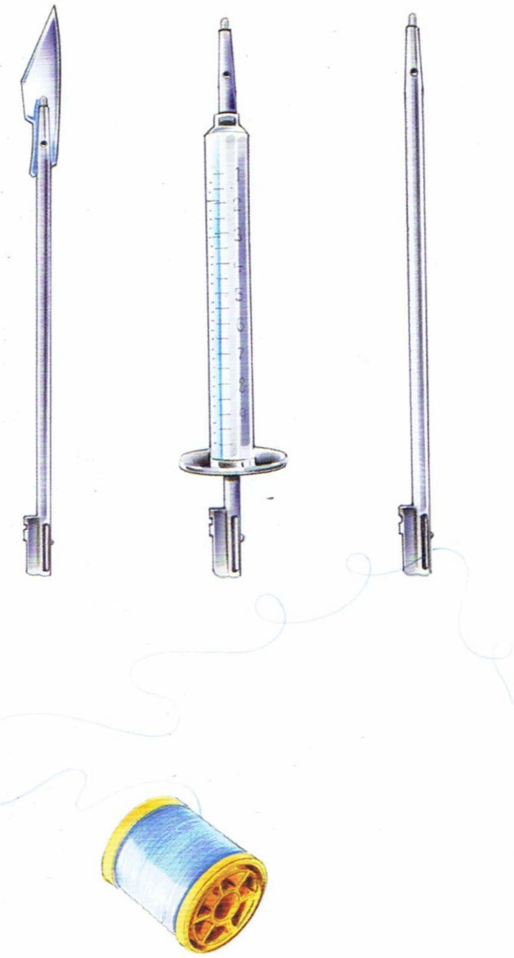
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TRAUMA CENTRE: UNDER THE KNIFE

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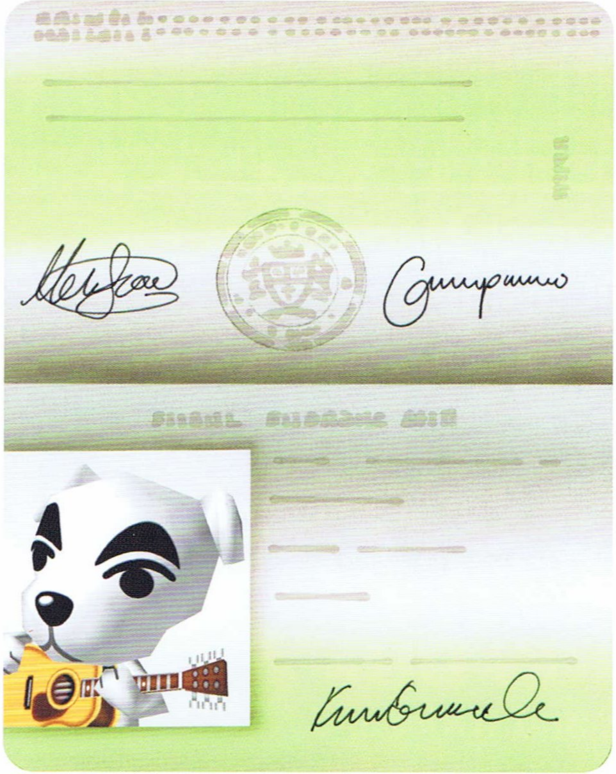
New ways to operate.





ANIMAL CROSSING: WILD WORLD

Use Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection to drop in on your friends around the world. Travel in groups of up to 4, admire what they've done to their town, and enjoy the complete freedom of Animal Crossing: Wild World. See you there. Out 31st March.



New ways to make faraway friends.



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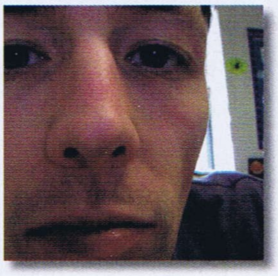
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REVENGE IS SWEET



Have you ever been lucky enough to consider yourself genuinely good at something? And has your formerly unswerving confidence then been shattered by a rival with that crucial bit of extra talent? To put it another way, do you know the true meaning of 'pwnage'?

I always thought I was pretty decent at *Tetris*, but earlier this week, when my Wi-Fi rating rose high enough to match me with a better class of opposition, I was brought back down to earth with an almighty bump.

There are people out there who play like robots. I'll be stacking blocks as fast as I can, dispatching row after row of coloured bricks, only to get hammered by somebody capable of moving their thumbs faster than I can think. How can this be?

Since me being 'not as clever as I thought I was' is clearly not a sensible explanation, I've come up with a theory: evolution.

Somebody picking up *Tetris* for the first time in 2006 will naturally be better at it than I was when I first played it in 1990. You see, I watched this cartoon once where they explained that people can solve crosswords from yesterday's paper much faster than today's, because the solution is already 'out there'.

When thousands have mastered something, everyone else can dip into a well of shared knowledge and get an intellectual boost. For free! It's sort of comforting to know that my years of uninspired *Tetris* toil have resulted in a generation of super players who will wear their fingers down to arthritic stumps before they're out of their teens. Ha!

Enjoy the magazine (while you can still turn the pages) and go easy on me if we ever meet online.

MARTIN KITTS



SUBSCRIBE TODAY!
Head over to page 20 to see how you can get **NGC** delivered direct to your door, before it hits the news stands. Oh, and you'll get a copy of the excellent *Viewtiful Joe 2* as well.

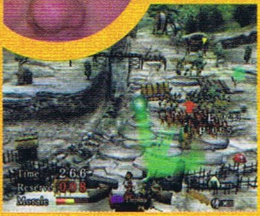
TURN OVER THE PAGE!
Head over to page 6 now for Sega on Revolution and Zelda on DS.

THIS MONTH WE HAVE MOSTLY BEEN PLAYING…

ALEX



■ Alex subscribes to the 'method' technique of games reviewing – he gained 16 kilos and wore a nappy in the office while playing *Odama*, then shrunk himself to the size of a thimble and lived on electricity for *Chibi Robo*. Madman or genius?



JES



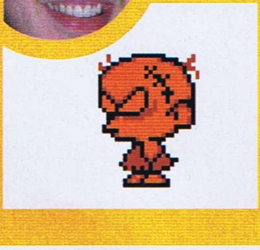
■ Jes's love affair with *Metroid* is doomed to failure. Every time it looks like they've patched things up, a celebratory bout of online fun ends up with our squeaky-headed funster having his 'ass' gift-wrapped and presented to him by a succession of ten-year-olds.



GREENER



■ Life was better in 2D. The announcement of all those Sega and Hudson games on Revolution had Greener dreaming of *Alex Kidd* and *Mario Party*. Smelling salts quickly brought some colour back to his face, and a tonking at *Tetris* snapped him out of his retro fugue.



NGC'S
FIVE STAR
GUIDE TO WHAT'S **UNMISSABLE** THIS ISSUE!

1 PAGE 34



CHIBI-ROBO!
'ELPFUL AUTOMATON
Toy Story meets *Metroid* meets *Pikmin*. It's ace!

2 PAGE 46



NARNIA
POSH KIDS MEET LION
Surprisingly great film-to-game conversion of the, er, film. It's honestly quite good.

METROID PRIME HUNTERS
PAGE 22

Online shooting in the palm of your hand!



TM







*clue: it's written in the instruction book

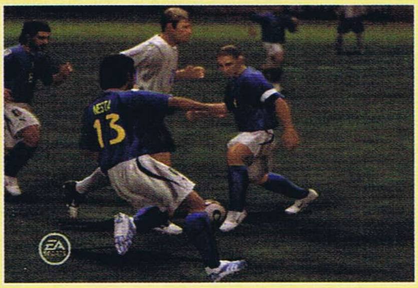
WHAT'S IN NGC?
The magazine in microcosm! I suppose that means we could just sell this page for £3.99. Hmm.

PREVIEWS
Gestating gobbets of baby-game. See 'em grow!









NEWS
What's happening in the scary outside world.

OTHER STUFF
A mystery grab-bag of fruity goodness.



REVIEWS
Games eviscerated! Or rated, at the very least.

OUR PROMISE

In order to get the most up-to-date gossip to you, we keep our news pages open right till the last minute. We suspect that this month we'll be forced to sprint to the printers with them in a high-speed relay and, if you've ever seen games journalists running, you'll realise what a terrifying prospect this is. If you're reading these words now, at least you know that we fought the good fight. Let's just hope no lives were lost.

NGC BRINGING YOU NEWS FIRST

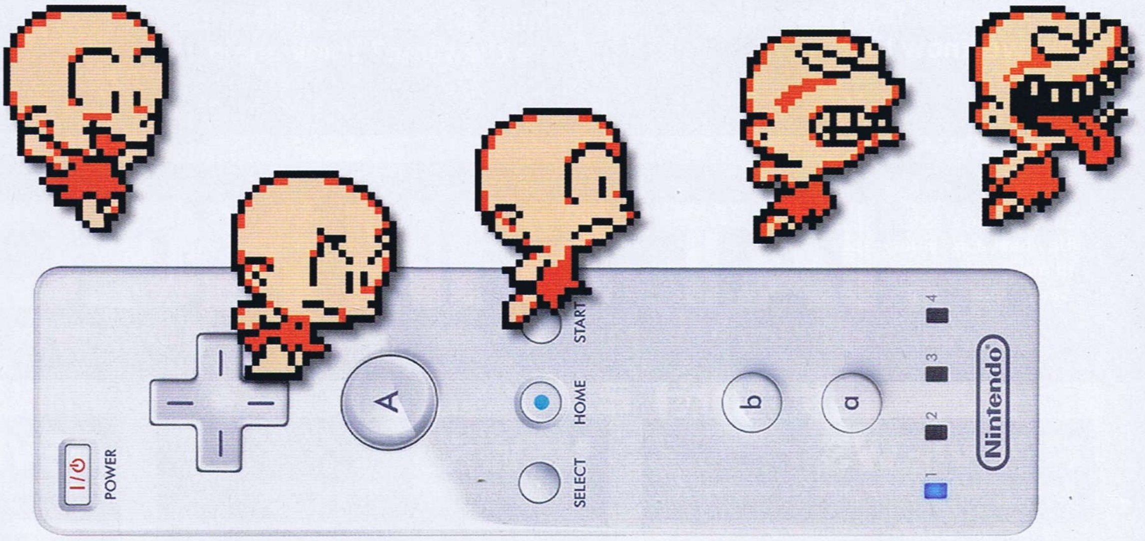
NEWSDESK

IN NEWS THIS MONTH





6 VISUALS +
+ 7 MASTERY



1000 SEGA AND HUDSON GAMES SIGNED UP FOR REVOLUTION



Iwata promises diversity, disruption and low cost downloads via Virtual Console.

Satoru Iwata, President Of Nintendo has confirmed that more than one thousand games from the Sega Mega Drive and the NEC Turbo Grafx systems will ready to download on Revolution's Virtual Console.

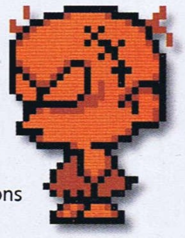
Speaking to an audience of fellow developers, publishers and the media at the Game Developers Conference, he confirmed what many had suspected for some time – that the Virtual Console would cherry pick more than just the best retro games from Nintendo's own NES, SNES and N64 back catalogue.

This list of titles to be offered has yet to be revealed but he did say it would be more a "best of" selection taken from both machines. Going on to call the service "the video game version of Apple's iTunes music store" Iwata-san also hinted that while the "future Zeldas and Marios and Metroids are going to be bigger masterpieces than ever before" the Virtual Console would also promote innovative software, keeping costs for developers as low as possible.

Sega for their part in the deal will be hoping that getting their back catalogue onto Revolution will introduce more gamers to their long and largely distinguished history, even reinvigorating a few forgotten faces perhaps in time for a next-gen revival. Touchable *Ecco The Dolphin* anyone?

While pre-show speculation had focused on the expected revelation of the final name for the next-generation console, Iwata was keeping his card close to his polo-necked chest. Instead he talked about Brain Training, soft drinks and how Nintendo are promising to 'disrupt' the console market with their quest for innovative gameplay, and not just graphical power.

But at least the Revolution machine itself, on show in a nearby case, was giving away a few more secrets. Looking slightly thicker than previously seen, it was also missing the mysterious rear port that had appeared in the plans submitted on the patent. No formal specs were released, but it seems increasingly likely that Revolution will be basically an enhanced Gamecube – Hollywood and Broadway, the GPU and CPU of the new machine, are said to be faster versions of Gamecube's Flipper and Gekko chips. Judging by the screens we've seen (sorry, but we'd be kicked in the 'nads if we printed them) which look very much like GC games, this seems to be the case. Here's hoping Rev's gameplay renders graphical comparisons with PS3 irrelevant.



A LINK TO THE FUTURE!

Say hello to The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass!



We knew a DS *Zelda* was on the cards, but we had no idea it would look – brilliantly! – like *The Wind Waker*. Unveiled by Satoru Iwata at the Games Developers Conference in March, it's going to be out this year, and looks set to use the DS to its fullest advantage. We've no idea what the story might be about – could it be a sequel to *Wind Waker*? The graphical style is certainly the same, and it features sailing. Here's what we know so far, from the footage that was shown…

A Sailor's Life For Me

Looks like there's lots of sailing and islands involved, giving credence to the theory that this is linked to *Wind Waker*. But please, Nintendo, no Triforce quest this time. Or, at least, make it shorter.



△ When you're at sea you can, again, put the map on the touch screen and draw the route that you want your boat to take.



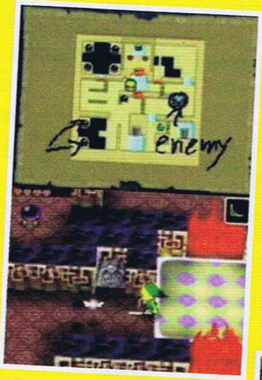
△ Once your ship is on its way, the map moves to the top screen, and you'll follow the boat in real-time.



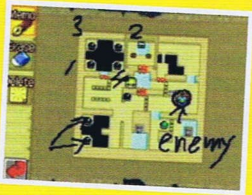
◁ Of course, enemies might appear to make your life difficult. It seems you can shoot at them while your boat follows its course.

Map Mania!

The game map is shown on the top screen – amazingly, it appears that you can drag it down to the touch screen, and with the stylus, annotate it to help you with puzzles and monsters.



△ You can see here that the player has scribbled enemy placement on the map – something to avoid, we assume.



△ Here, Link's come across a puzzle solution, which the player has scribbled onto the relevant part of the map.









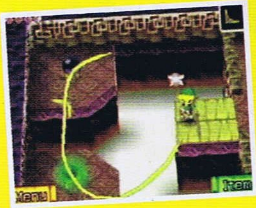


'Rang-tastic!

Once again, Link's trusty boomerang returns, and it's now used via the touch screen, rather than locking on by passing the cursor over an enemy.

▷ That yellow line is the trajectory of the boomerang, drawn using the stylus and touch screen.

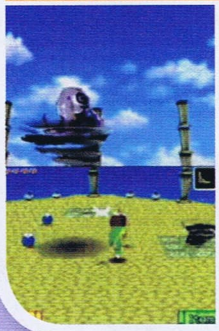




◁ Simply draw where you want the boomerang to go, and off it flies on the course you've decided for it.

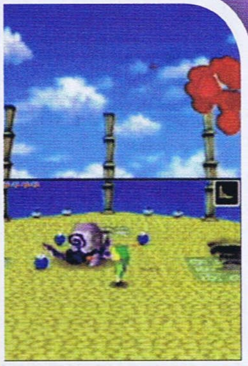
Epic Encounter

Naturally, there are huge, screen-filling bosses to contend with – it wouldn't be a Zelda game without them, eh? Will there be any *Four Swords*-style multiplayer bosses? Our rumour-stick says yes!





◁ Look at this! This fight straddles both screens, against an enormous squid-in-a-whirlwind. What are the odds?



△ Once the boss is floored, Link can skewer it good with his trusty Master Sword. Damn dirty squids.

Coming Soon

With E3 just around the corner, we're sure to know more on *Phantom Hourglass* very shortly. We'll have it all, and much more besides, in another issue of – what else? – **NGC**.



WEBOLUTION!

Spider-man to swing onto Revolution?

There've been plenty of rumours flying around this month concerning ol' webhead's premier appearance on the Revolution. Allegedly, when the film is released next year, the console will get a specific version of *Spider-Man 3* tooled towards using the remote-style controller (we like to call it the wonder wand, or, er, wondand for short – cough). How good would that be? Imagine using the controller to cast weblines and swing through New York – it's got the potential to be *amazing*. Although, as Martin points out, it'll also have the potential to make a lot of motion sickness-sufferers very sick indeed. But who cares? It sounds ace! Hopefully E3 next month will give us some confirmation.



△ Up top, a bonus slot machine.



△ Up top, a bonus slot machine.

BLANKETY BLANK

Lightgun shooter squeezes onto DS!

Perennial lightgun favourite *Point Blank* is coming to the DS, just in time for a vague summer release. Incorporating over 40 blasting-based minigames drawn from the three previous *Point Blank* games on the PlayStation, naturally it won't come with a lightgun, but will instead let you shoot things via the stylus and touch screen. Brilliantly, it's also going to let you play wirelessly with friends with only one copy of the game. Now *that*, Ninty-friends, is value for money. Feast your eyes on these screen shots and start exercising your trigger finger. Well, your stylus-finger, at least.

ANIMALS CROSSING ONTO REVOLUTION

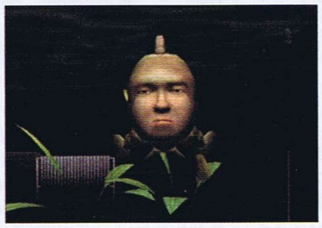
Run away from the beast-headed freaks!

More snippets from the March's games Developers Conference: in possibly the least surprising news since Morgan Spurlock discovered that eating McDonald's three times a day is bad for you, it turns out that the monster-populated life simulator *Animal Crossing* will be - wait for it! - coming to Revolution. Who'd have thunk? Well, actually, this 'news' comes from Katsuya Eguchi, director of the series, who mentioned in a lecture called "Is That A Franchise In Your Pocket?" that Nintendo are currently "exploring how to bring what we have developed in *Wild World* onto Revolution". Let's hope it's similarly online, eh?



SEA-QUEL SOON...

Dreamcast dreamer plans to develop for DS.





△ Seaman on Dreamcast. Eek!

His name scrolls up at the end of some of the strangest titles ever to appear on any console, but now legendary developer Yoot Saito is turning his attention towards the DS. The creator of the first (and still the weirdest) voice-activated pet-developing game, *Seaman*, said "We're working on a different title right now that will use the network and microphone, but unfortunately I can't really discuss it yet".

We'd love to know what he's working on but then judging by his track record with *Seaman* and military strategy/pinball title *Odama*, he'd probably love to know what he's doing too.



ARISE, SIR SHIGSY

France gives gong to Miyamoto.

The French Ordre des Arts has finally recognised the genius of superior games designer, Nintendo overlord and steel-string-strummer Shigeru Miyamoto, who received the rank of Knight in the Order of Arts and Literature. Sadly the title doesn't allow him to rise to his natural position as king of all the Gallic territories, as the French have gone in for regicide in a big way since 1793.

JOIN THE BRAIN GAMES

Two more taxing thinking titles for DS.

While we decrepit souls in the West wait for May to expand our ageing grey matter with *Brain Training*, others have decided to leap onto the brain-wagon. So Nintendo has announced the two more mentally challenging DS titles called *Kageyama Hideo No IQ Teacher DS* and the more snappily entitled *Right Brain Kids*. So far there is no news yet as to whether either will ever get a Euro release.





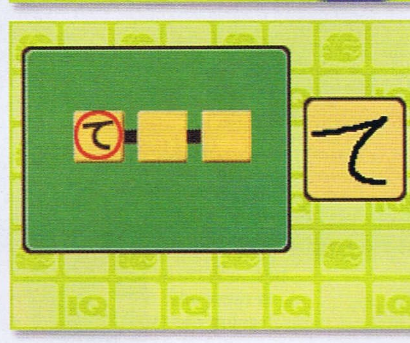




△ Yeah, we could probably solve this one.



△ A family of brain-trained people. We do apologise.



△ Hey, that says 'te'. Easy, this brain lark.

WRITE YOU ARE

Here's another chance to write your own reviews for NGC…

SECOND SIGHT



Unable to make up its mind, *Second Sight* is a poor amalgamation of a shooter and a stealth game. However, where other titles (such as *Metal Gear Solid*) have succeeded, *Second Sight* makes a hash at both genres.

The stealth sections are badly designed and unforgiving, needing pinpoint precision to navigate in the manner intended but hampered by the two poor camera choices and twitchy controls.

The archaic implementation of the psi-powers feels rigid and unresponsive. You need only to look at *Psi Ops* (a game released at the same time, though sadly not on the Gamecube) to see how fluid and intuitive the controls could have been. Instead, simple object movement becomes confusing and awkward.

The much heralded plot is actually nothing special. Changing present events via past scenarios is neither original nor creative, I wonder if those who think it's 'teh b3st St0rY ev@!!11!' have ever picked up a book?

Second Sight was supposed to be a triumphant break from the norm for Free Radical. I can't help but think that unless they markedly improve on this distinctly average attempt, their efforts would be better focused on another *Timesplitters* game.

Matthew Pellet, via email

VERDICT 55

We Say: Geraint liked it, but he's off his rocker.

NGC said 90

FIRE EMBLEM



I am writing this review fresh from being handed my backside on a plate for the fifth time in ten minutes. After buying *Fire Emblem* just under a year ago, I'm finally on the last battle after restarting the game twice. For sheer chuck-the-GBA-across-the-room-ability, there're few finer.

But I keep playing. *FE* is an exquisitely crafted game, made with love, care, intelligence and a dash of wit. Is it perfect? Oh no. Whoever decided that making shops only available on the battlefield deserves to have a Steel bloody Lance embedded squarely in their forehead. (As happened to my brave crew many times.) And the 'once you're dead, you're dead' rule means many weak characters are never built up as much as they should be because after ten attempts at winning a battle it's just so much easier to have Marcus steamroll the opposition and earn 6 measly EXP from twenty dead enemies.

Apart from that, it's blissful. It oozes charm like some sort of charismatic jam doughnut, it's clever enough to force you to think four moves ahead, and its deadly addictive. If it weren't for those two niggling flaws ah well. Rumour has it *Sacred Stones* sorts them out

Sam Bridgett, Farnham

VERDICT 90

We Say: You've got numbers coming out of goblins' heads, for the likes of Jes, and it's actually good fun to play. For everyone else.

NGC said 92

STARFOX ADVENTURES





You know, I didn't want to write about *Starfox Adventures* for my first review, because I thought it would be too predictable. But the more I thought about telling you just how WRONG you were over the likes of *Kirby's Air Ride* and *Mario Sunshine*, the more I realised that the greatest injustice in your long history of hopelessly inaccurate reviews was perpetrated on Rare's farewell masterpiece.

Maybe 'masterpiece' is stretching it just a little bit. Maybe 'very enjoyable way to spend 15 hours' is a better description. But no matter how disappointed you were with the game or with Rare's decision to take their bollock-eyed characters and lame jokes to Microsoft, there is simply no way in the civilised universe that this is only worth 74%. You've got to be kidding! That's the kind of score you throw at Pixar platformers and bland-o-rama sports sims. You should have just come clean and admitted the true reasons you were knocking at least 10 marks off what it would have got if it was any other game from any other company.

So what if Prince Tricky is an annoying prat? Who cares if the plot doesn't make sense? It's FUN to play, and probably the best looking thing on Gamecube.

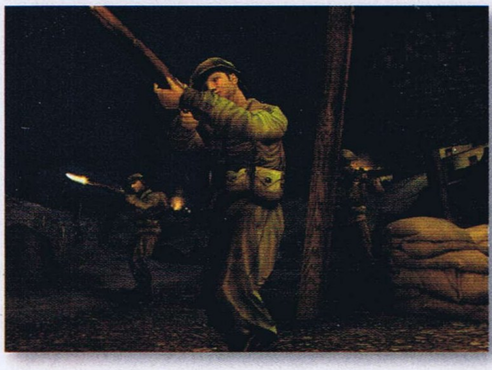
Jason Sharpe, Milton Keynes

VERDICT 87

We Say: It would have been nice if you'd told us exactly why you found the game to be fun. When we did that review, our feelings of anticipation and excitement faded to frustration and bitter disappointment. We completed the entire thing – crappy space sections, massive empty corridors and feeble combat included – in the hope that even a tiny part might live up to our unfeasibly high expectations, but it didn't. Anyway, 74% is hardly a terrible score. It's more than *Goldeneye Rogue Agent* got.

NGC said 74

CALL OF DUTY: BIG RED ONE



If WWII was fought along pre-determined paths, then perhaps those millions of soldiers may have been spared. It's certainly the case of the soldiers in *Call of Duty 2: Big Red One*. The game retains the same Nazi-shooting, fascist-slaying, first-person shootery. However, this time, the creators have thrown in an attempt at a storyline, but sadly it is very messy and has literally been thrown in!



The best bit about Finest Hour was the realism. It was as close as you could get to real combat without getting shellshock, but this game is a lot more like *Medal of Honor*, and that's a bad thing.



But is it any good? As a sequel, no. But as a standalone it is well worth your money. Genital jokes aside, *Call of Duty: Big Red One* is an excellent, competent first-person shooter.

Jon-Paul Towers, via email

VERDICT 71

We Say: "A basic but enjoyably frantic shooter."

NGC said 80

BATTALION WARS



Yet again, you have showed your incapability of reviewing games. I've been playing *Battalion Wars*, and have found it a thoroughly unenjoyable experience, yet you gave it 90. Why on earth did you give it that? OK, it has great moments, but it's flawed like Malaysian cars.

1) Soldiers happily stand and take an acid cloud to the face, rather than move back two paces.
2) A group of assaults, bazookas, recons and infantry failed to take out a single rifleman.
3) It is possible to empty an entire clip on an enemy one meter away, yet not hit him once.
4) The targeting system will lock onto pointless objects in the distance, and off-screen, rather than the enemy right in front of you.

At other times, it locks onto your own troops, which the game clearly thinks of as a higher importance than the enemy, moments away from my flag. Most damage is done by me because of the absolutely useless targeting. I thought the game was made in Britain not America.

I have not seen anything like this since *Ikaruga* or *Killer 7*.

The main difference is those two are good.

Dominic Egan, Leigh-on-Sea

VERDICT NO VERDICT GIVEN

We Say: We gave it 90 'cos we loved it. But then, quality is subjective, so it's fine to disagree; however, you say it has great moments, and then conclude that it's not good. Hmm.

NGC said 90

6 VISUALS + 8 SOUNDS + 7 MASTERY + 5 LIFESPAN

HOW TO WRITE A REVIEW!

Whether you disagree with something our resident writer-snooglers have said, or whether you simply want to tell the world how much you love a game, you've got your chance here (see below for address). You never know, we may even print your carefully considered thoughts right here in black and white and some colour. For anyone who's a little uncertain about putting fingertips to keyboard, here are some Do's and Don'ts to help you out…

DO'S

- Remember that, ultimately, you're telling the reader whether the game is worth their valuable money.
- Double check your copy for correct grammar, spelling mistakes, and so on. Exdellent English is a must.
- Justify and explain all your criticisms. Why is the game poor? Tell us exactly why it's not good, if that's the case.
- Be enthusiastic and passionate. Games are brilliant! And if they're not, you can still be passionate about telling us why that is.
- Pick out a favourite review from **NGC** and analyse it; why is it a good review? What does it do that makes it successful? Does it get you excited about the game, or tell you exactly why it stinks?
- Think about what you want from a review. If you were a reader (which, er, you are), what do you expect from an **NGC** review? Try to reflect this.
- Remember that games usually loosely fall into a particular genre; if the game's a *Zelda*-style adventure, how does it stack up against, say, *Wind Waker*? You don't need to talk about this, but it will help you conclude how good or bad the game is.

DONT'S

- Don't use clichés, eg, "If you like bananas, you'll love this", or "it's got great graphics", or "war? What is it good for?"
- A little creative license is good, but try not to use rubbish non-existent words like 'addicting' or 'lastability'.
- Humour is great, but don't use it to the exclusion of useful criticism. Cheap gags are no substitute for cold, hard knowledge.
- Remember that people want to read about the game, not about you. Avoid saying 'I' and what you had for breakfast.
- Don't waffle on for ages. Make your sentences as short, manageable and to-the-point as possible.
- Don't divide your review into categories; it's easy to talk about the graphics, and then the sound, and then the gameplay. How does the game make you *feel*? This is much more important than robotically talking about visuals and lifespan. Focus on the good points and the bad points.
- Remember that if something's unique, it's literally one-of-a-kind. There's no 'quite unique' or 'sufficiently unique' (a pet hate from Mr Cooke).

Think we've scored a game wrongly, or do you just want to share your love of the latest big thing? No matter what your reasons, scribble a 200-word review and either email it to us at NGC@futurenet.co.uk, or send it to the following address. We'll print the best ones we receive in every issue. Get writing!
Write You Are NGC Magazine, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW

OUR NEW BEST MATE
New Super Mario Bros producer Takashi Tezuka says that he wants to "recapture the spirit of the original *Super Mario Bros*." Sounds fine to us, Tezza. Tezza. Mmmm. Do you mind if we we call you that?

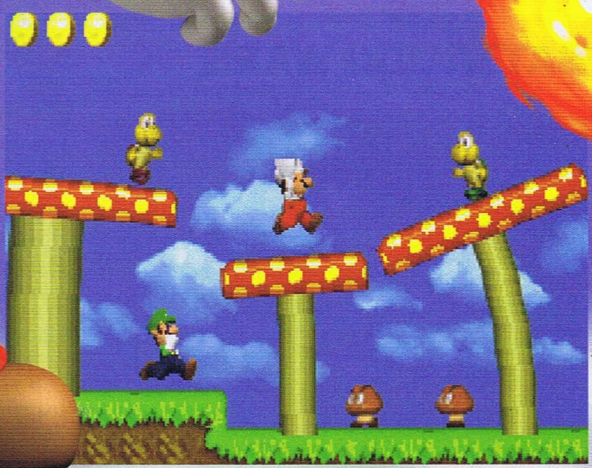
Oh.















NEW SUPER MARIO BROS

Our favourite plumber returns to his roots.

THE KNOWLEDGE

- The first proper new 2D *Mario* in a long, long time.
- Incorporates wireless multiplayer for two, with one player as Mario, the other as Luigi.
- Range of new power-ups, including one that makes Mazza MASSIVE.

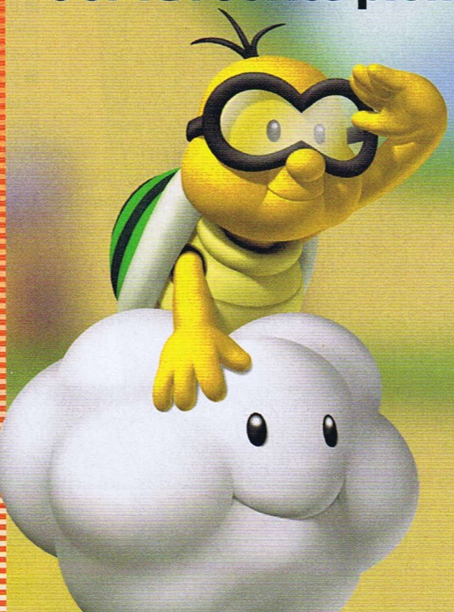
FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Nintendo

What have they done before?
Super Mario Sunshine (NGC/73, 96%)
Not as good as *Super Mario 64*, but a joyfully sunny tropical holiday of a game. Aaaah.

Mario's back. Again. In his *Partners in Time* review in issue 114, Geraint noted that the plucky plumber might have lost a little of his unique cachet of late, given that he's starred in a vast amount of games that have little or nothing to do with why Nintendo's mascot is so loved, or why he's remained so vital over all these years. But with his laugh-out-loud DS action RPG, our hero began to retrieve the respect he so deserves, and with *New Super Mario Bros*, the reputation regeneration will be complete. Stripping away the grimy patina of countless *Mario Parties*, *New Super Mario Bros* gets to the kernel of what makes, and always made, the boy great; platforming *par excellence*, that shows everybody how it's *really* done.

Of course, in doing so you could argue that this *New Super Mario Bros* isn't really 'new' at all. It's back to basics for Mario, back to the 2D plane, secret bits, and brilliantly-implemented inertia that we so fondly remember. But who cares? Can any of us really complain about a long-overdue slice of side-on fun? We're certainly not about to, and even if the game





WATER WAY...

...to go! See what we did there? Splendidly, the underwater levels return, in splishy-splashy DS-o-vision.



■ Look! Bloopers! Fresh from *Super Mario Sunshine*. Hateful ink-squirting gits.



■ Thankfully, Mazza can still use his fireballs underwater. Take that!



■ Naturally, no *Mario* game would be complete without an enormous fish.





△ "Hoi, wait for me, you little green–"





△ Uber-Mario: smaaaaaashhhhhh...





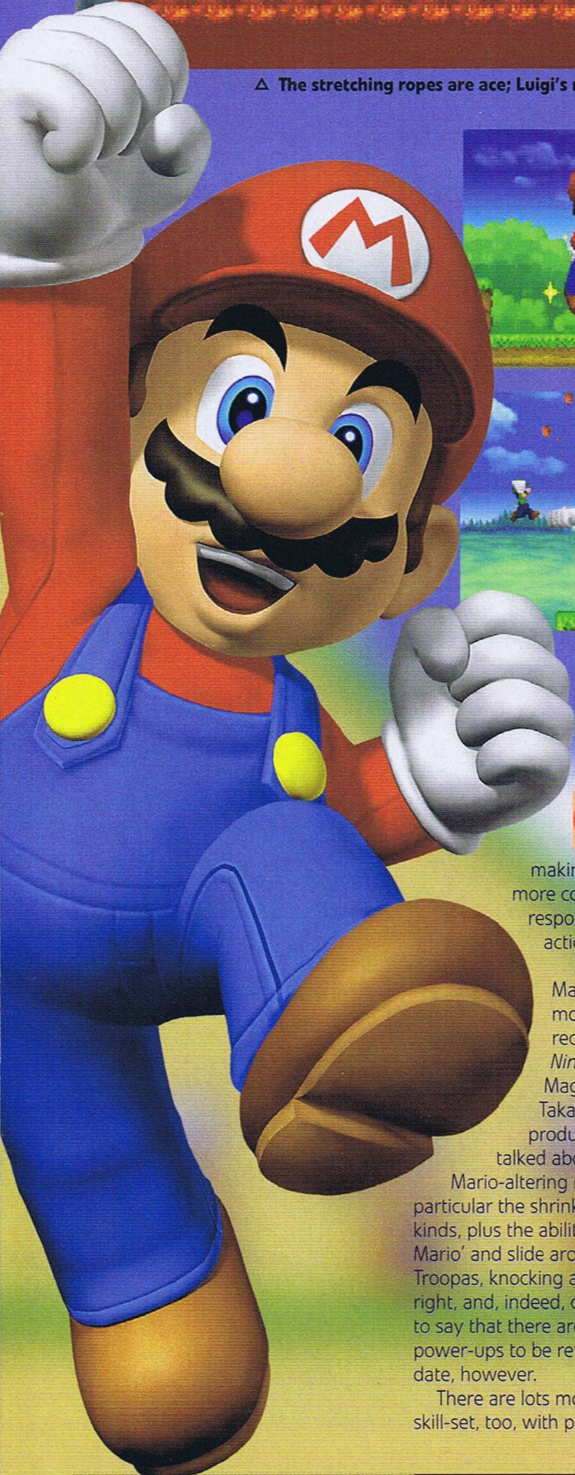
seems like a step backwards in some respects, it also reminds us of why we started playing videogames in the first place. Outright, unalloyed *fun*. And isn't that what gaming's all about?

And oh what fun it is. The game may still be 2D but the characters are all 3D, and there are some delightful effects in evidence. One of the new power-ups expands Mario to enormous, screen-filling size, and the screen zooms in and out with aplomb, lending a sense of scale unseen in previous 2D *Marios*.

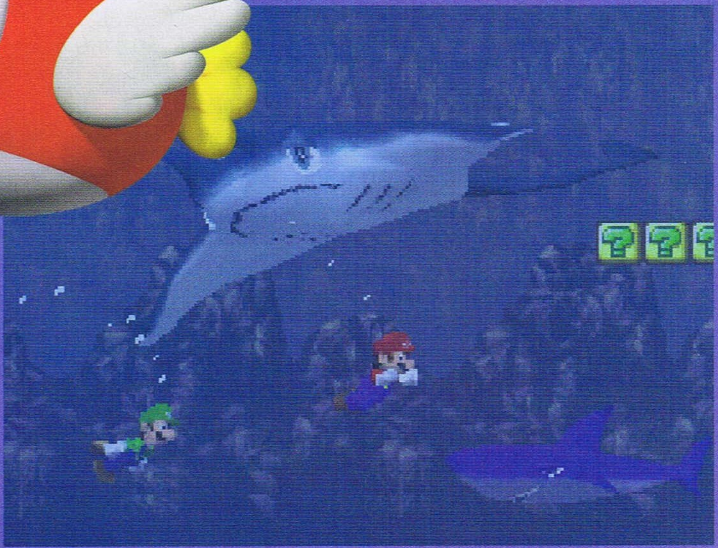
Hand in hand with the visual aesthetic is advanced physics, which sounds really boring when you write it down, but which actually adds plenty to the feel of the game. For instance, ropes stretch and







△ The stretching ropes are ace; Luigi's mincing about is less so.



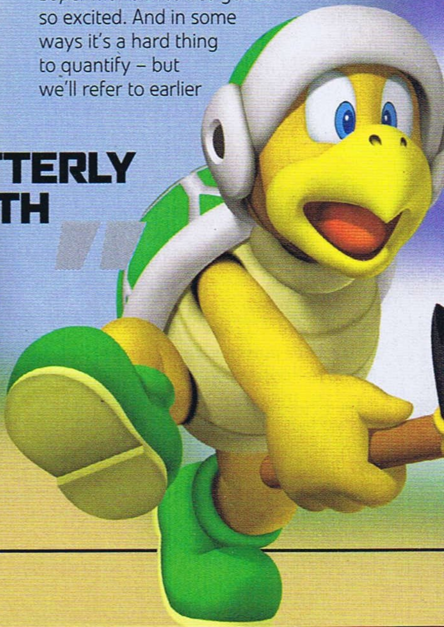
△ You'll soon work out that all of the fish here are a little bit depressed.







△ Instead of going to Oz, this twister's taking Mario straight back to the N64…



sag under Mario's weight, making the world feel more cohesive and responsive to player action than ever before.

And, of course, Mario's got plenty more powers. In a recent interview with *Nintendo Power* Magazine in the US, Takashi Tezuka (the producer of the game) talked about the return of Mario-altering mushrooms, in particular the shrinking and gigantism kinds, plus the ability to become 'Koopa Mario' and slide around like, well, Koopa Troopas, knocking all and sundry left, right, and, indeed, centre. He went on to say that there are plenty more power-ups to be revealed at a later date, however.

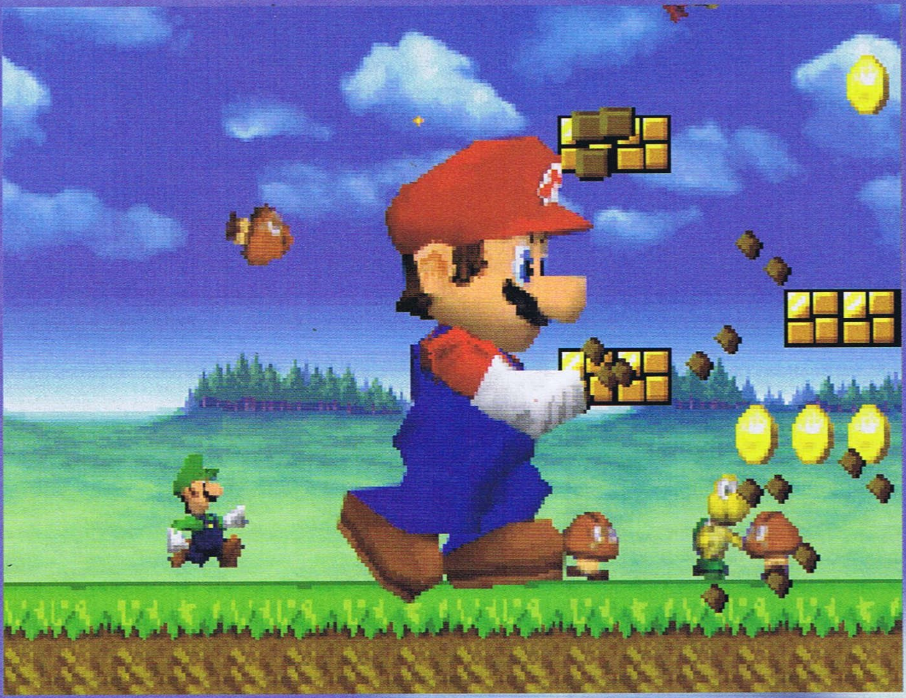
There are lots more moves in Mario's skill-set, too, with plenty of *Super Mario 64*-inspired wall jumping and a dive-bombing drill attack that can crack through blocks at the bottom of the screen – which brings us to the DS and how the game uses it. Disappointingly, 'not that much' is the answer; the touch screen can be used to select power-ups, and on occasions when you venture underground, the action switches smoothly to the touch screen, too. But, as *Advance Wars DS* proved, you don't

"THE GAME IS UTTERLY FESTOONED WITH SECRETS"

have to use the DS to its fullest advantage to be brilliant – although, splendidly, there is wireless multiplayer support that looks absolutely cracking.

The multiplayer component is essentially a left-to-right race, full of obstacles and enemies, and power-ups to nobble your opponent. Imagine a 2D side-on *Mario Kart* with legs and jumping instead of wheels, and you're in the ballpark as far as imagining how it works. Great stuff.

All of which sounds good, but you may be wondering exactly why *New Super Mario Bros* has got us so excited. And in some ways it's a hard thing to quantify – but we'll refer to earlier







△ Who would have guessed that this pair of brothers are a couple of swingers?

GIANT STEPS

This is going to be *so* much fun. Make Mario massive and smash all and sundry into little bits. Bliss.



■ Look at him! No block will remain unpunished when Big Mazza gets his fist on it. Lovely.



■ Deep snow? No problem. With tree-trunk legs and enormo-shoes, our hero can bestride any obstacle.



■ That fat-lipped fish is going to get one hell of a surprise when Mario turns around and lamps him.

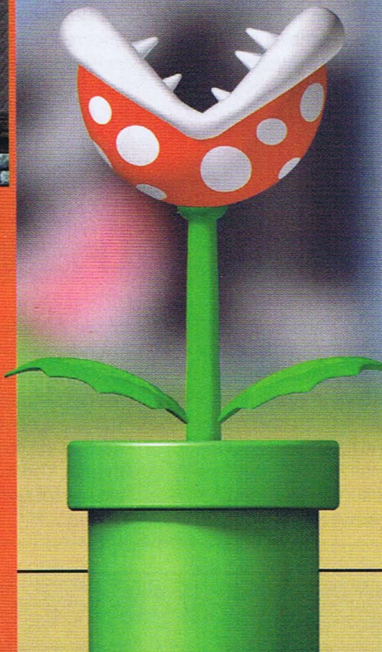
in this preview when we said it's just fun. In many ways, the game is an exemplar of the direction Nintendo is going with the DS and Revolution. It's not about graphical splendour (although, of course, *New Super Mario Bros* looks lovely), technical wonder, or how many teraflops can dance on the head of a pin: it's about gameplay. And in this respect, *New Super Mario Bros* delivers absolutely. The control is close to perfect; the range of moves and abilities is varied and surprising, feeding straight into the considered design of the game, and it is utterly festooned with secrets, just like the *Mario* games always have been. And all this is just from the little that Nintendo has shown of the game so far; there are so many more surprises still to come.

Nonetheless, to reiterate, yes, this is a new spin on an old template. But when that template is so exquisitely fashioned, and has been so magically retooled, who cares? We want to play the finished thing so much that it *hurts*…

WALL GOOD THINGS…



As we mention elsewhere in the preview, *New Super Mario Bros* takes many of its cues from the all-conquering *Super Mario 64*, as far as expanding Mario's moves is concerned. As well as getting boosts by jumping on the heads of appropriately positioned enemies, you can also engage in a fine spot of wall-jumping, which is a first for a 2D *Mario*. Let's hope plenty more of the 3D *Mario* moves make it in there, eh?



NGC VERDICT

UK SUMMER | US MAY 15 | JAPAN MAY 25



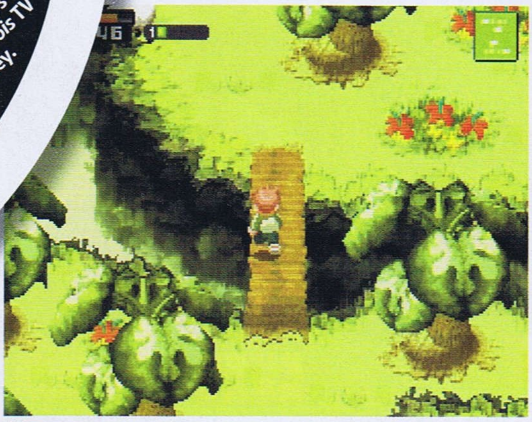
It's an odd state of affairs when what is essentially an update of a time-honoured gaming template gets the NGC team more excited than they have been for a while. But we're in no doubt as to just how much fun this will be – a slice of classic yesteryear future-fettled into one of 2006's most-anticipated games. Hopefully we'll have import impressions next month…

ANTICIPATION RATING

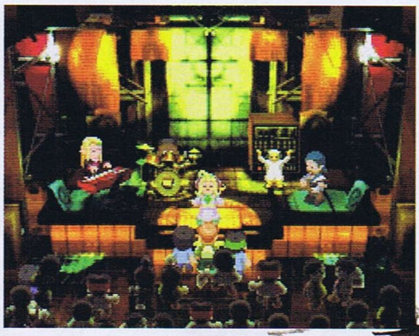
1 2 3 4 **5**

ART ATTACK

Contact also features character designs by a certain Atsuko Fukushima, who apparently worked on anime classics *Akira* and *Kiki's Delivery Service*, as well as the *Popolocrois* TV series (whatever that was). Blimey.



△ The lower screen graphics are nothing short of beautiful.

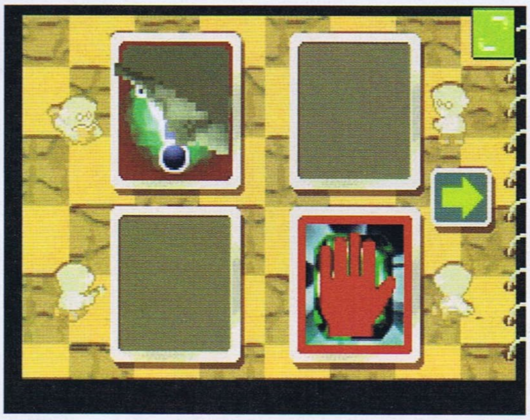


△ Hey ho, let's go.

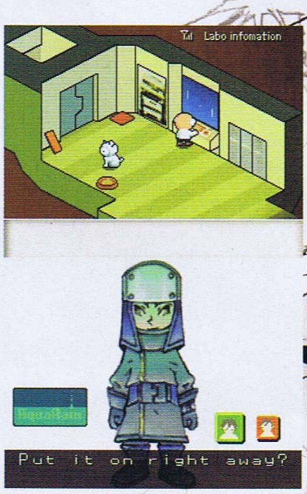


THE KNOWLEDGE

- DS RPG that sees you helping an alien professor repair his spacecraft.
- Includes as-yet unspecified Wi-Fi online action. What could it be?
- Breaks the 'fourth wall' and talks to you – the player! That's, like, deep, man. Cough.



△ Touch screen commands ahoy. Have it, orcs and goblins!



△ Very stylish.



FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Grasshopper Manufacturer

What have they done before?
Killer 7
(NGC/109 84%)
Frankly insane but refreshingly original shooter-cum-adventure. Not one for the young 'uns.

CONTACT

Aliens are among us! And they're little bald professors.

This looks brilliant, and not least for being a completely unexpected follow-up to *Killer 7* from developer Grashopper Manufacturer.

Ostensibly an RPG, the story sees you, as Terry, hornswaggled into helping a crashlanded alien professor re-assemble his ship. This is where things get interesting; the professor talks to you, the player, about Terry's progress, thus raising many questions about what is 'real' and what is the game, a conceit cemented by the contrasting graphical styles of the professor's base (on the top screen) and the game world (on the touch screen). Intriguing, eh?

Beyond such metaphysical concerns, however, this looks to be as deep as you could wish for. A vast amount of stats are at work behind the scenes, and in exploring the world, young Terry must obtain costumes which enable him to train as, say, a chef, or a fisherman.

Beyond this, there are also magical abilities and weapon-based skills, and 'seals' (not the mammal) that encompass the above and, apparently, more. Seals can be peeled off the touch screen using the stylus, and placed elsewhere for their effects to work. We've yet to see this in action, but it certainly sounds novel.

Contact will also be playable online, although publishers Rising Star are keeping schtum on exactly how, as yet. Regardless of this, though, *Contact* is looking weird, wonderful and very promising indeed…

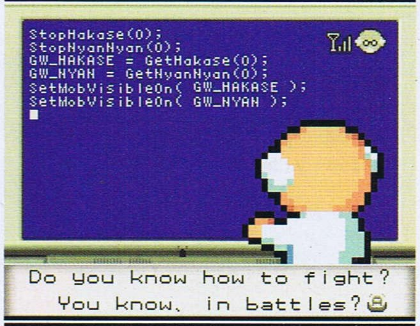
> **"TERRY MUST GET COSTUMES, WHICH ENABLE HIM TO TRAIN AS A CHEF, OR A FISHERMAN"**



△ Looks very much like a certain piece of Rare monkey business.

NGC VERDICT

UK AUTUMN | US AUTUMN | JAPAN NOW



Coming from the designers of *Killer 7*, we're at least expecting this to be refreshingly different, but we'll be happy if it simply succeeds as a decent RPG. Having said that, we're definitely sold on the whole blurring-the-line-between-game-and-player angle. Surely this'll be one of 2006's most interesting DS games in any case.

ANTICIPATION RATING

1 2 3 **4** 5

FREE* GAME for your mobile phone!

FREE Mobile game brought to you by NGC
INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING

YOU PLAY, WE PAY

We tested dozens of games and picked out three of the most enjoyable titles...

TOMB RAIDER



Lara Croft and her iconic pair (of pistols) have discovered an exciting new world of adventure – on your mobile! This cracking action romp boasts 15 levels of ancient ruins for you to explore, each packed with death-dealing traps and fabulous treasures. With fluid platforming and satisfying controls, this ain't no bimbo. If you're up for a challenge, Lara's your girl!

eidos

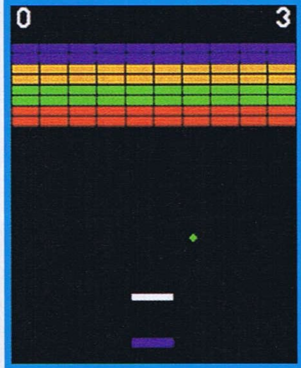
CANNON FODDER



If you like your action shot through with strategy then Cannon Fodder is the game for you. Your aim is to guide a tiny band of brothers through more than 20 enemy-infested missions. But don't expect to just blast your way to victory – you need to use your brains to figure out how best to use the machine guns, grenades and bazookas at your disposal. War has never been so much fun!

Kuju wireless

ATARI LEGENDS VOL.3



Retro games can be a bit of mixed bag but you won't need to put on your rose-tinted specs here – this latest raid on Atari's capacious vaults has produced a trio of cast-iron classics that are just as fun now as they were way back when. Pick and mix from either bat-n'-ball legend Pong, brick-bashing spectacular Super Breakout or the rock-blocking beats of Asteroids Deluxe.

i fone — LICENSED BY ATARI



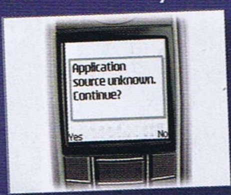
Just choose one of the 3 titles listed then text NINT to 62344. Check out the 'how it works' panel for more information. It's easy!

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Say 'Yes' if prompted to download the service. Download problems? Check out 'Frequently Asked Questions' at www.mad4games.com



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No Subscriptions! No Worries!

No need to worry about sneaky subscriptions; there aren't any! The NGC browser makes sure you only get games that work on YOUR phone.

MAD4 GAMES

Wi-Fi NOT?

What with all these Wi-Fi-enabled DS games coming out, we thought you might like to play us online some time. If you ever fancy it, head on over to the forum at www.gamesradar.com – we keep a regular eye on it and will be happy to swap Friend codes for some sweet gaming action.

LOSTMAGIC

Your chance to get a little bit 'Ali Bongo' on the DS. If you know what we mean…



△ **So, there'll be a fair amount of defeating evil magicians, then.**

We've yet to get an RPG that truly does the DS justice, but Ubisoft's forthcoming *Lostmagic* (all one word, curiously) might just be the one we're waiting for. (Along with *Contact*, of course, which you might have read about on a previous page. And if you haven't, why ever not?) The reasons for its promise are twofold: firstly, it allows you to control your characters in PC real-time strategy-style, via the touch screen, by grouping and ordering them around with but a touch of the stylus, and secondly (and most importantly) you use the touch screen to actually *draw* spells.

Each spell has its own particular shape, and while the game is clever enough to let you get away with a rough scribble approximating a given shape, the more accurate you are and the quicker you are, the more powerful the spell will be. Sounds *brilliant*! Chuck in some online WiFi fun – we're thinking one-on-one wizard duels – *Pokémon*-style monster-collecting and over 350 spell combinations, and we're on the verge of donning our wizards' hats and shouting "izzy wizzy, let's get busy!" in delirious glee. Except for Martin, that is, who's just sort of glowering thunderously in the corner. It's his way, you see. The game's out shortly, so hopefully we'll have a full-on review next issue. All together now, "izzy wizzy…"


△ **"Hey, come over here – I've found one that sounds like Paul Daniels."**



△ **"Let's suspend this one over the Thames in a glass box for 44 days." "Nah, let's just kill him."**

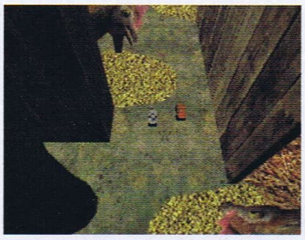
MICRO MACHINES 4

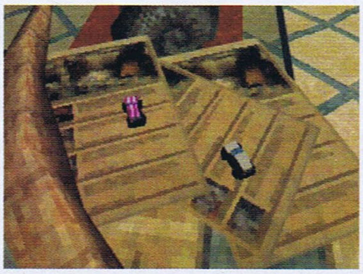
Are they small or is the world big? No-one ever told us.

Good news, everyone! One of the finest multiplayer racers ever – *Mario Kart* excepted, of course – is coming to DS. Hurrah! *Micro Machines 4* is set for a summer release and, while we haven't yet got any DS-specific news on it (it looks likely that you can use the touch screen for *Ridge Racer*-style steering, and that's it so far, which will be a little disappointing if that's all there is) it's certainly looking like a return to laugh-out-loud basics.

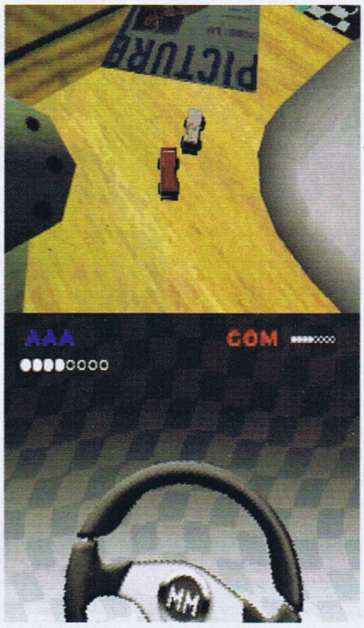
Some favourite tracks are back (the inestimable breakfast table, for instance) and there's a riot of new ones that allow you to venture outside and hurtle over roofs, and into the supermarket. Apparently you can even head down to the farm, and if there's not an enormous cowpat to skid through, splattering bits of, er, 'pat' on the screen, there'll be hell to pay.

Anyhoo, plainly, this is all good news, and we hope that eight-way wireless multiplayer is going to happen – and it'd be amazing if you only needed one copy of the game to do it. C'mon, Codemasters, you know it makes sense.




△ **There's no two ways about it. These cars just aren't built for the portly gentleman.**


△ **The average micro machine is just the right size for a small dog to choke on.**

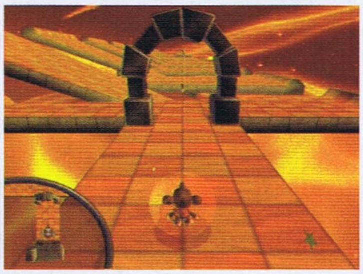


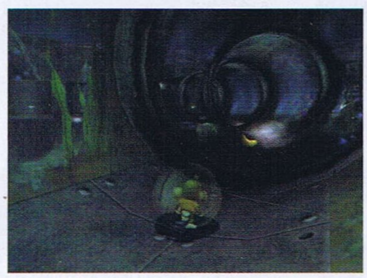
△ **Stay on the track, or else you're off the table and into somebody's cup of coffee.**

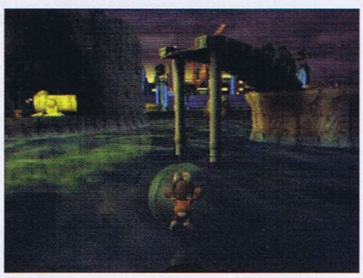
SUPER MONKEY BALL ADVENTURE

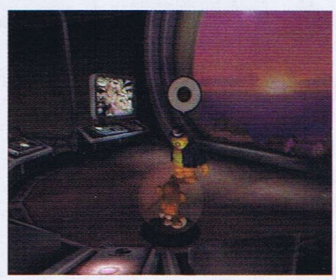
Hey, hey we're the monkeys in balls that can turn invisible…


△ **"I don't understand. Where's the goal? And why are none of the parrots in balls?"**


△ **This looks like a promising and motion sickness-inspiring old-school level.**


△ **"Hello? Anyone home? The door to the labyrinthine underground was open…"**


△ **Yeah, so, looks like a cannon up ahead. We're more worried about the shark.**


△ **Dunno if you can trust this dude – he appears to be speaking in doughnuts.**

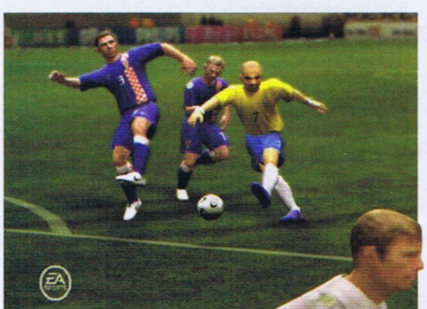
More new shots of the forthcoming *Super Monkey Ball Adventure*, and it's all looking – dare we say? (*Dare, dare!* – **Ed**) – sweeter than a baby's bottom covered in liquified Haribo Tangfastic.

We'll admit we were a teeny bit worried that development duties had been handed over to Traveller's Tales from Sega, but screens show that it's coming along nicely, being hewn in the same art style as before, and offering a honking great single-player adventure to boot. Don't worry, though, there are apparently 50 new puzzle levels for those that want some old-school monkeying (ha!) around, and the multiplayer party games are back with a vengeance.

But it's the adventure aspect that's got us in a frothy mess, as it's a first for the series and looks to be coming along very nicely. We already know that our simian heroes can use special balls with specific abilities – including ones that can turn invisible – but we've yet to actually seem them in action. Soon, my friends, soon. The game's out in the mysterious 'Q3' and we're hoping our little brains out that we'll have some hands-on reports of it sooner than you can fling a chimp.

2006 FIFA WORLD CUP GERMANY

Some kind of sport, we think, where you score 'points' by putting a 'bolus' into a 'net'.


△ **The ballet mode is impressive but not really about football.**





By the time you read this, the latest iteration of the game they call *FIFA* will be nestling snugly on shop shelves, and possibly, if you've bought it, in your Gamecube. In which case you'll know all about it. But if you don't, it's obviously the officially licensed game of the event, and, it says here, offers 12 official stadiums, almost 100 actual, real-life players (digitised and shrunk into in-game homunculi, we guess, not the actual, real-life players themselves), and 127 national teams. Coo!

It also sports eight-way multiplayer action, and a 'Global Challenge' that lets you recreate classic moments from FIFA World Cup history. We're hoping that means you'll be able to prod an enormous Gazza face with hot knives until he cries, but the more football-savvy members of the **NGC** team (which amounts only to Kittsy and arch wordsmith Alex Cooke, to be honest) just rolled their eyes and tutted, so perhaps it won't happen. Still, next issue we'll have a woefully after-the-event review, so we'll all know by then, won't we? Come on the footballers! Score us a point! (Dies.)


△ **Well isn't this a nice looking stadium? It's very… oval?**

OUR PROMISE

Our reviewers are the most talented and knowledgeable Nintendo fans in the business. We don't only play games at work – we play them at home too, just like you. We ensure that we've played games through to the end so that we can give you a proper verdict – and one that saves you from wasting money.

NGC THE VERDICT YOU DESERVE!

REVIEWS

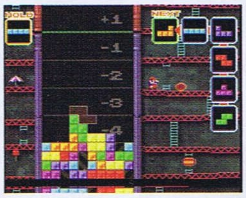


METROID PRIME HUNTERS

Let's get this straight. Online multiplayer first-person shooting on the DS? Criminy! We're living in the future, and the future is good. See what we think of Samus' latest adventure on… **P22**

TETRIS DS

More online fun, but with falling blocks, not bounty hunters. Rockin'! **P50**







PLUS!



OUR SCORING SYSTEM

0-24
Crushingly awful, massively dull. Rest assured this game is absolute crud.

25-49
A disappointing title, stashed with nasty faults and likely to be short on any quality.

50-74
Some great bits, some not-so great bits. Decent but definitely problems.

75-89
Great fun, brilliantly programmed at times, but probably flawed.

90+
Rarely awarded, a 90+ is essential. Buy with confidence.

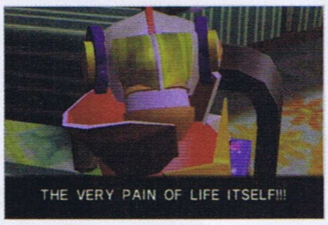
NGC STAR GAME

MEET THE NGC TEAM

What *Chibi-Robo!* character do you think you are?



MARTIN
"You want the truth? You can't handle the truth! I already told you – I don't KNOW why I don't have interlocking teeth."



ALEX
"The very pain of life itself is born out of the hypothesis that the will of a duck has ontological primacy over its intellect."



GREENER
"No, no, don't get up. It's only a scratch. Don't you worry about a thing. No, no, I'll just sit down here and write Timewarp."



JES
"Har, har me laddies. Away to the Revolution with ye! Let's hoist the dual sails and ride them to glory."

"*Hunters*' greatest achievement is its fabulous multiplayer"

NGC STAR GAME

METROID PRIME HUNTERS

Samus' latest is a miniature manhunting marvel. Behold!



INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	NSTC
RELEASE DATE	5TH MAY
PLAYERS	1-4
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	YES
WI-FI	YES
MIC	YES
COST	£30

TM

BACKTRACK

The single-player game follows the same format as the Gamecube Metroid Prime and its sequel, Echoes. You'll be backtracking to open up previously locked areas when you get the weapons that allow you to do so.

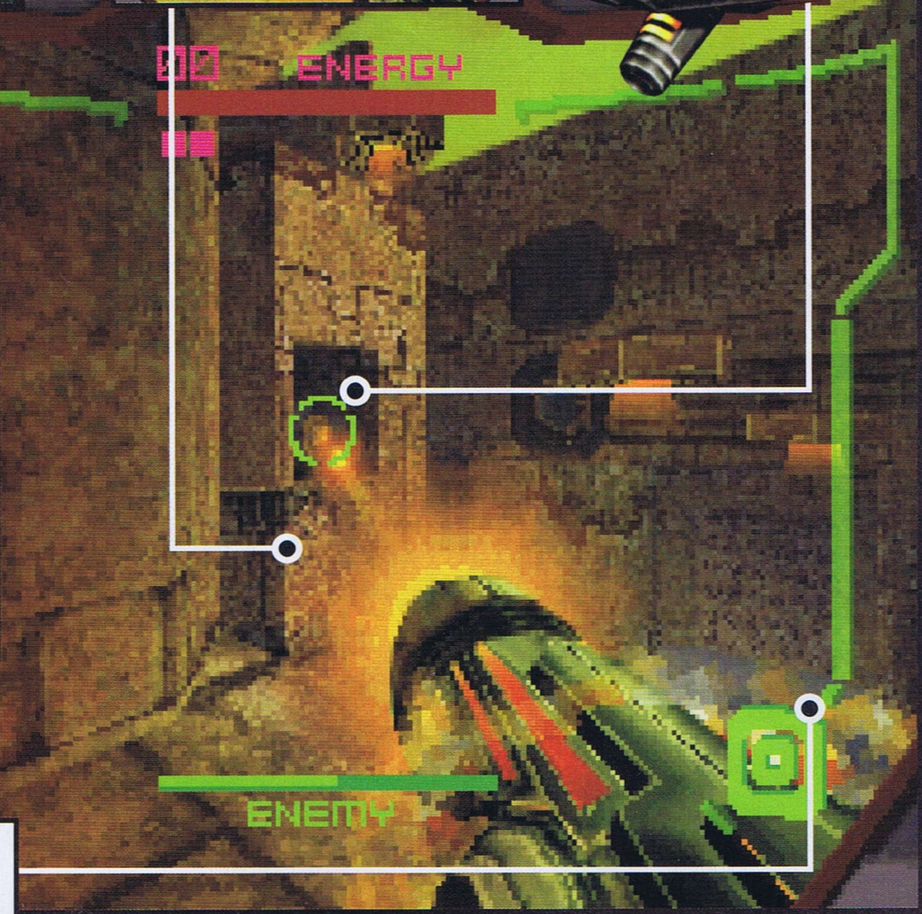


SHOOT OUT

Unlike Metroid Prime, however, the game doesn't furnish you with fancy equipment, preferring to stick to a more traditional first-person shooter format. There's a lot of circle-strafing multiple enemies and shooting them dead.

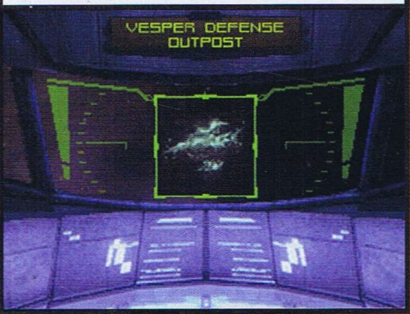






FLY THE FRIENDLY SKIES

You're not limited to one world in Hunters. You'll get to fly between several planets in Samus' ship. Just get back to it – via handy teleporters on each level – and you can take off and explore the skies your heart's content. Nice.



MORPH ME UP

There's a fair variety of morph ball sections to the game, although they're not as prevalent as in Metroid Prime and Echoes. Your rival bounty hunter enemies have their own alternative forms to contend with, too.







Δ **"To get a better view, you can – hey. Where'd everybody go?"**



Δ **"Oh no – it's already ten to two."**

"Much more like a regular first-person shooter"



△ You start the game exploring the spookily-named Celestial Archives. This is very much a getting-to-grips-with-the-game level, where you'll get your first taste of scanning, fighting and artifact-nabbing.



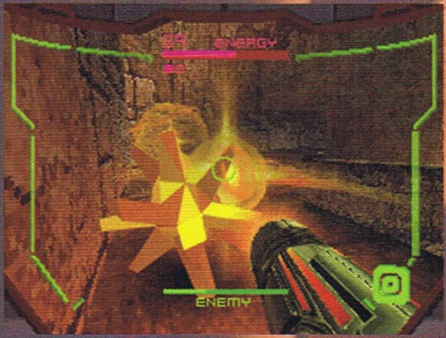
△ You'll also fight your first boss, a nasty (and boringly static) organic cylinder that fires laser beams o' death at you. You'll have to shoot the blue eyes off him and obliterate the white brain-orb at the top.



△ In keeping with *Metroid* tradition, after you kill the boss there's a countdown to explosive death, meaning you've got to get out sharpish. The novelty wears off as this happens on every world.



△ Next, it's off to the lava world of Alinos. Not that you see a whole lot of lava once you're in the complex. Here's you'll fight not one but two rival bounty hunting scum...



△ First up is Spire, a rock-based lifeform who is after your artifacts (ooer). Stay away from him when he's in his alternative form, as he can extend his stony shell to give you a good, hard whupping.



△ During the evacuation countdown you'll then have to fight Weavel, an ex-Space Pirate. He can separate his body so that his legs function as a gun turret. This is in no way a good thing for our Samus.



△ The third world you'll visit is the Vesper Defence Outpost, a combination of space station and slippy-slidey ice world, complete with frictionless ice surfaces that are a joy to skate around.



△ There's a fair bit of morph ball action here, both the 3D and side-on 2D varieties. You'll have to do that annoying double-bomb jump to get a handy missile upgrade. Just mind the electric fences!



△ The Vesper Defence Outpost also holds the first weapon upgrade – the Battlehammer. You can use this to get through any impenetrable green force fields you might have come across earlier...



For the few people that either didn't like or understand the lock-on based control system of *Metroid Prime* and its sequel, *Hunters* is going to be mana from heaven. It is literally like playing a PC first-person shooter, with the touch screen taking the place of the mouse and the face buttons the W, S, A and D keys (or, if you want a more Nintendo-esque example, using the analogue stick and face buttons for *Timesplitters 2*). As such, despite a single-player game that mostly (more on that portentous 'mostly' in a moment) holds true to *Metroid's* legacy as an experience about exploration, this is as close to *Quake* as it's possible to get. And on a handheld, no less.

It's a remarkable technical achievement, and at times we could barely believe that it was running on a handheld console. For the most part it's smooth and slick, the only barriers to full enjoyment being the discomfort of holding the DS for an extended period of time, and the inevitable wrist cramp that comes from pushing the stylus all over the place with one hand, and supporting the DS and using the buttons with the other.

In fact, for all the technical genius of the control system, there's something not quite perfect about it. Mainly it's the aforementioned discomfort. Then again, you can use the thumb strap instead of the stylus, but if your hands aren't big enough that proves to be equally as painful in the long term. In fact, for the extended play that reviewing the game demanded, we found that using the D-pad in order to look was a perfectly adequate solution. It's not as precise or quick as using the stylus or thumb strap, but it works well enough. Having said that, though, we reckon using the D-pad in online games is going to be virtual suicide. It's too clumsy a tool to tackle the deathmatch elite, once they've mastered the game. But for the single player game, where the CPU-controlled beasties



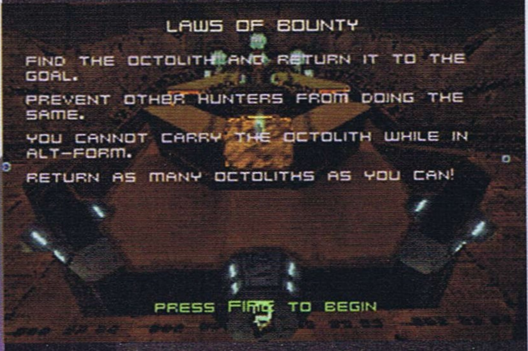
CONTROLS

Unlike the First Hunt demo, you can invert the controls in Hunters, which is brilliant news. There are also four control schemes that you can choose from – two that use the touch screen and two that use the D-pad. Something for everyone, then.



MULTI MASSACRE

Multiplayer** Metroid Prime Hunters **is a blast, although if you're playing online it's best against Friends.



■ When playing multi-card play, or playing online against Friends, you get to choose whichever mode and map you want. You only get Deathmatch if playing strangers online.



■ This is one of our favourite levels, Transfer Lock, which sports low-gravity outer-space bits with jump pads, just like in *Quake III*.



■ We're playing Bounty here – there's one Octolith on the level that you have to capture.

aren't as quick and inventive as a human player, it works just fine.

But back to that 'mostly' in the first paragraph. While *Hunters'* greatest achievement is its fabulous multiplayer mode, the single-player element is a game of two halves. It's an adventure along the lines of *Prime* and *Echoes* – an explorathon through several different environments, this time with worlds and space stations that you can fly between as you wish. All of Samus' extra equipment is dispensed with, though; there's no grapple beam, for instance. Rather, progress is predicated on acquiring certain weapons, and using them to disable like-coloured doors. As such, there's plenty of familiar backtracking to enter areas that you couldn't previously access, and the single-player game is rather admirably large.

But it's much more like a regular first-person shooter than *Prime* or *Echoes* ever were. There's an awful lot of dumping you in a room with plenty of enemies as well as a heavy emphasis on *Quake*-style shooting for shooting's sake. On the one hand, this is absolutely fine, due to the superbly-implemented controls; on the other, it's lazy, cheap and repetitive compared to the considered design of the original *Prime*. It's going to be very interesting to see what the people who always wanted *Metroid* to have more traditional controls think of this; as for us, we reckon it's a great diversion, but it also highlights how brilliant *Prime* and *Echoes'* unusual control and design is.

The action emphasis also leads to some utterly horrendous difficulty



SMACK MY BOT

Brilliantly, you can set up a multiplayer game with bots (computer-controlled opponents), meaning that you can play mutliplayer games on your own, or else add them to other games if you find you don't have enough players.



"As complete a package as we could have hoped for"



BOSS BLUES

Say hello to the Slench; three tongues and an eyeball of pain.



One of the two repeated bosses, the Slench, is horrible. He can be fought in two stages: first you need to shoot the three tentacle/ tongue things surrounding the enormous eye until they writhe and curl up.



After this, the eye will detach from the wall and fly around, raining bolts of death at you. You need to shoot him in the tiny aperture in the centre of the eyeball – hit him enough and he'll return to the wall. Rinse and repeat.



When you get low on health – and you will – you can shoot the green bolts he throws at you, which, if you're lucky, will furnish you with health and ammo. The second time you fight him is utterly hellish. Good luck.





△ This octolith also doubles up as a fancy disco ball.

spikes. The first half of the game offers both a battle with a rival bounty hunter and a boss encounter on each world. On the icy Arcterra, once you've killed the boss, a countdown begins; before you can get to the safety of your ship, you'll have to fight the insectoid Trace, followed by a final encounter with some gun-happy Guardians. It's no exaggeration to say that at this point the game almost went out of the window. It's a hard, unforgiving and unfair sequence that feels cheap and lazy. For the most part, however, we thoroughly enjoyed Samus' first 3D handheld jaunt and, while it can't compete with the splendour of *Prime* or *Echoes*' single-player efforts, and is quite repetitive at times, it's still very absorbing.

But it's the multiplayer that'll keep you coming back. It's *brilliant*, and offers online options and depth that *Mario Kart DS*, as magnificent as it is, simply doesn't. The combination of the various game modes, arenas and hunters – who all have their strengths and weaknesses due to their alternative forms – makes this as complete a package as we could have hoped for. But it's brilliant with caveats; if you're playing online, you'll only have access to all modes and levels if you're playing with Friends (the same goes for between-game voice chat). If you're playing strangers, you only get a straight-up deathmatch... which is disappointing.

This aside, however, it's ace. The various modes all offer distinct twists to the gameplay – one of our favourites is Bounty, a free-for-all ruck to grab a single Octolith – and the option for team games means there's a wealth of permutations for face-shooting fun. It's here that the *Quake* influence becomes really apparent – specifically, *Quake III Arena*. There's a good proportion of bounce pads to fling you to higher levels, and a few levels that couple



STEALING

The whole 'hunters can steal your artifacts' angle is a little misleading. Basically, if a rival hunter kills you, he gets your Octolith, and then, when you re-start the fight and (hopefully) kill him, you'll get it back. It's not like they just swipe it and run off.



△ Samus is still waiting to trial a monkey-operated morph ball.



△ Even a built-in arm cannon is easier on your arms than playing 8 hours' DS straight…







TWO LEGS BAD

Incontrovertibly your most hated enemy, the Guardian is hell on two legs. These bipedal death-bots are utterly hateful things, and you'll often get locked in a room with several of them to destroy. They're quick, and tough, and a complete pain in the fundament. We found that shooting a few rockets at their feet is the best way to send them to robot hell.

△ Playing this online is going to occupy your every waking moment, as well as some of the sleeping ones.

these with low-gravity areas and deadly drops into outer space. But while the influence is glaringly obvious, it works, and it works brilliantly. *Metroid Prime Hunters*, as a multiplayer FPS, is easily equatable with the mass of PC shooters, or even classics such as *Timesplitters 2* or *GoldenEye*. The controls are superb, the action (mostly) fluid and smooth, the weapons balanced, and the arenas wonderfully designed. Some of the hunters are certainly more useful than others in a given scenario – Weavel's ability to turn his legs into a gun turret while his torso wanders around separately give him an advantage in the Defend scenario, for instance – but they all have something to offer.

Metroid Prime Hunters is a technical marvel but, more importantly, it's hugely enjoyable. Sure, if po-faced sci-fi isn't your thing, and you prefer racing big-nosed plumbers in karts to shooting a boulder-built alien bounty hunter, then this probably isn't for you. But there's room for both in our philosophy, and *Hunters* is a tiny handheld miracle.

If you're able to get online with it, you're going to fall in love immediately, despite the limitations when playing with strangers. It's remarkable, guns-blazing fun and, wrist-cramps aside, one of the DS's finest moments. Buy it, and be amazed. It's good to have you back, Samus.

JES BICKHAM



TOUCH ME

The touch screen isn't just used for looking around; from here you can also select different weapons and enable your 'alt-mode'. Annoyingly, however, when you teleport you sometimes lose your selected weapon and have to select it again. Grr.

> **"THIS IS EASILY EQUATABLE WITH PC SHOOTERS OR EVEN CLASSICS LIKE GOLDENEYE"**

+

- Brilliant online multiplayer.
- Meaty single-player.
- Excellent controls.

–

- Single-player is less engaging than *Prime* or *Echoes*.
- Murder on the hands.

IF YOU LIKE THIS…

GoldenEye Rogue Agent
EA
NGC/110 3/5
Passable Bond-based first-person shooting.



9 VISUALS
Pin-sharp and super-detailed – you won't believe it's on DS.

8 SOUNDS
Atmospheric tunes firmly in the *Prime* tradition.

9 MASTERY
A technical masterpiece, the occasional hiccup notwithstanding.

9 LIFESPAN
The single-player is meaty, but the multiplayer is huge.

VERDICT

Not without its faults, but this is as complete a package as you could hope for. The ultimate DS multiplayer so far.

NGC 90

"Diligence and fanaticism, but very little intelligence"



△ While the sound remains in Japanese, the text is in English. The result is painfully slow.



△ The soldier's comments might get a laugh, if they didn't block out the action.

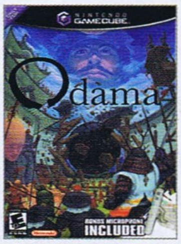


△ When proper pinball moments breakout, the game is dramatically better.

ODAMA

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	VIVARIUM
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1
MEM CARD PAGES	3
GBA LINK-UP	AS IF…
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£30







△ 'Advance' isn't the only word you'll shout at these troopers. The others are all bad.

Tilt Death Do Us Part… Yoot Saito's bizarre pinball mish-mash hits the UK.

Teutonic thinker Nietzsche said life is a choice between boredom and suffering, he didn't warn us that sometimes we have to endure both at the same time. Because *Odama*, this fusion of pinball and military strategy, this confusion of flippers and feudal soldiering, is a game you have to approach philosophically.

We wanted to love it, we really did. The whole idea is just so outlandish, so painfully weird that it just had to be enjoyable? Didn't it? Otherwise why did Yoot 'Seaman' Saito even attempt to create a voice-controlled real-time pinball/war game unless it was going to be truly brilliant? Why?

But if understanding the man-maverick's motivation is nearly impossible, explaining the rules of the game is only marginally easier. For each one of the all too similar levels is played out a single screen table/battlefield where your objective is to get four nappy-wearing skivvies to drag a bell from the bottom to the top. And to clear them a path through the massed ranks of rival warlords, you command an army who follow a set of simple vocal commands with diligence and fanaticism, but very little intelligence. And into this delicate balance smashes the Odama, the super-spherical weapon capable of crushing castles, damming rivers and flatten friend and foe alike beneath its

FOR WHOM THE BELL TOILS...

Command them or crush them. Accidentally of course.



Each battle begins with the launch of the Odama. And while it's hugely destructive, it's a slightly imprecise weapon because it can only be guided by using the flippers or tilting the table.



As well as running over troops, the Odama can be used to open doors, smash encampments and block rivers. While this can help your men, it can also destroy them by reopening flood gates.



But while the Odama is a mixed blessing, ignoring it can be fatal. Not only do your outnumbered men rely on it to even up numbers, if the iron ball falls between your flippers then then game is usually over.



Collect powerups and the ball will be turned into a holy roller able to crush your foes and convert their souls into your reserves. Which is handy when the enemy ranks seem to be unlimited.





△ **The enemy don't have an Odama so why do they have flippers?**





△ **Rally your chaps on an object and they will seize it. Eventually.**



△ **You carry your forces from one battle to the next.**



△ **Knock the general from his plinth and he will march around.**

indestructible bulk. Oh and it is your jump to simultaneously keep the ball rolling, the troops rallying and morale in the ranks rising.

But trying to splice Kessen and Kiss Pinball together hasn't resulted in the rise of an uber-game, more the birth of a tragedy. For *Odama* is simply a mess from the high concept right down to the screen-blocking squawking of each lowly soldiers. And while your army of the brain-dead mostly recognise your orders, any notions of tactical planning are continually rolled over by the blind stupidity of the Odama itself. For even this primitive pinball itself rarely works as advertised, often popping off screen, defying physics' laws at a whim, wiping out your own army with one false flipper-stroke or ending your game.



BELL ENDS

While issuing orders through the mic works, the limited amount of options, the relentlessness of the bell carriers and the shortage of info make a mockery of strategy. So while you can massacre the enemy with the Flank And Destroy order, the messy and crowded screen often stops you seeing how many troops you have. Weak.

Combined with a difficulty level so cruel that Social Services should be told is the way that winning or losing can seem as random as tossing a coin. Although at least if a ten pence landed heads up you'd know why you've won as with *Odama*'s shallow lack of strategy

sneering voice-over that mocks your failures, cheap and tedious cutscenes, repetitive level design and somewhat clumsy controls and just see if your ambivalence turns to anger.

But that is *Odama*, it combines things that should probably never

"ANY NOTIONS OF TACTICAL PLANNING ARE ROLLED OVER BY BLIND STUPIDITY"

and variety, you'll always feel that fortune played a greater role than your planning or pinball wizardry.

Now add a save system that wipes your progress if you go back to retry a previous stage, a

be put together: pinball and military strategy; ill-conceived ideas and poor execution; and yes, Mr 'Oddball' Saito and three year's worth of development time.

ALEX COOKE

+

- The enemy generals are fun.
- Utterly original.
- The mic is included.

−

- Painfully hard
- Confusing and messy.
- Everything else.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Pikmin 2
Nintendo
NGC/99 92%
It's cute not capricious, and still manages to be original without adding any pinball.



5 VISUALS

Somewhat dull and static, it also suffers from slowdown.

5 SOUNDS

Japanese voices, somehow less than memorable.

7 MASTERY

Not exactly a technical marvel but the mic works.

5 LIFESPAN

Cruel difficulty will turn off the casual and depress the hardcore.

VERDICT

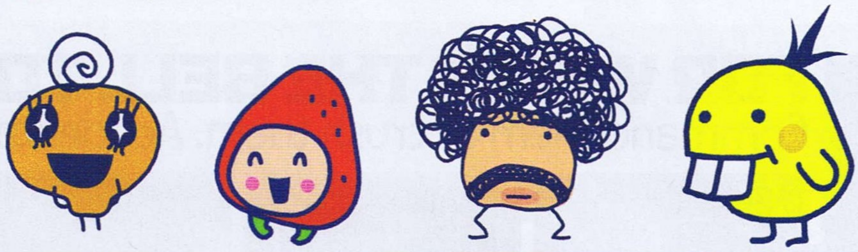
Cross-breeding between a pinball table and strategy game hasn't lead to a thoroughbred. This one is pure ass.

NGC 48

"Complete with horns, parp noises and claps"

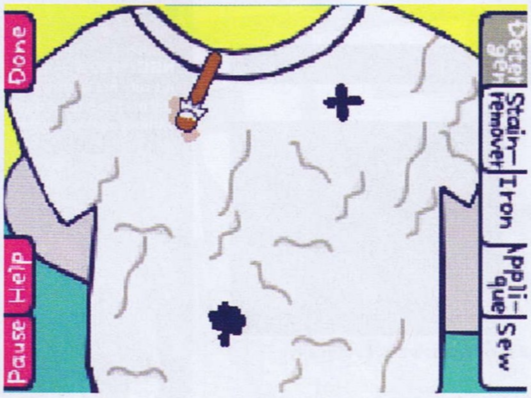


△ Prod him with the stylus and watch how annoyed he gets.





△ All manner of squash-faced freaks will clamour for your services. It'd be kinder to shoot them, but as this is a family game, you're duty-bound to work like a slave for them. It's all work, work, work.



△ It's like doing your own washing – but on the DS! Coo.

TAMAGOTCHI CONNECTION CORNER SHOP

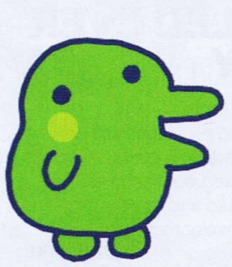
INFO BURST

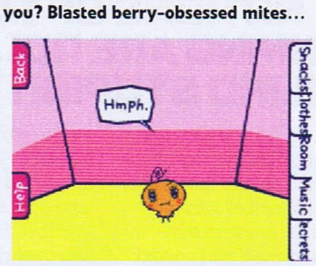
PUBLISHER	ATARI
DEVELOPER	BANDAI
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	YES
WI-FI	NO
MIC	NO
COST	£30





△ Don't ask for much, do you? Blasted berry-obsessed mites…





△ A Tamagotchi showing its wrath.

Cutesome critters and mind-numbing domestic drudgery, together at last!

It would be fair to say that the **NGC** team weren't particularly excited about this. What can *Tamagotchi* offer us nowadays? With the virtual pet craze that the original *Tamagotchi* kickstarted now refined and perfected by *Nintendogs*, we figured this would be a step backwards. And a muddled, confusing one, as *Corner Shop's* focus is on, well, shops. How does that work?

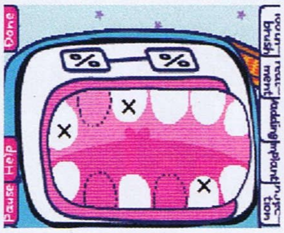
The answer, surprisingly, is really quite well. The actually caring and tending for your Tamagotchi is perhaps as simple as we expected, but it's buttressed by fun gland-massaging touch screen minigamery, and the whole package is wrapped in a big bow of utter charm. It's really quite lovely.

The idea with the shops is to work in them, and do enough successful business to build them up (literally – you can add storeys to them), enabling you to open other shops and eventually move to other cities. Doing so also garners you cash, which you can use to buy furnishings, clothes, snacks and suchlike, to please your Tamagotchi. As such, the game is split into two parts; 'care' and 'shop'. 'Care' is definitely the lesser part of the game. Decorating your Tamagotchi's room and dressing him (her? it?) up is only ever mildly diverting at best, and the 'shop' option is far more successful.

Each shop asks you to master a

OVERWORKED, LIKE A FISHWIFE

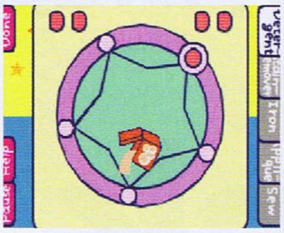
Work yourself to the bone, just like in real life!



Poking around in another Tamagotchi's mouth is always fun. See those black crosses? You need to drill those – with a drill, naturally – before you can attempt any kind of tooth-based fix-uppery.



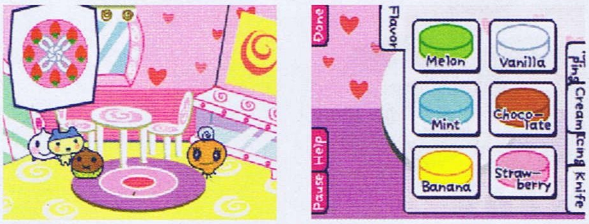
Once you've drilled a tooth, a hideous little mouth-homunculus will appear. So that's what causes tooth decay! Grab him with tweezers and toss him in the bin. Disgusting little thing.



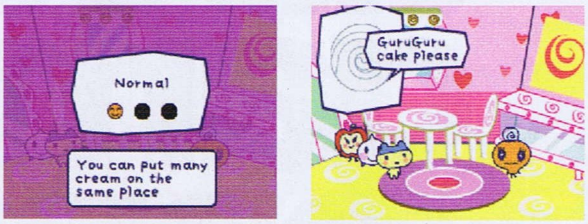
Cleaning is the activity which palls the most. Frantically turning the washing machine yourself is fun, but ironing really is a terrible chore, as is stain removal. About as much fun as it is in real life.



Playing in the music store is great fun, if initially overwhelming. Simply tap the icons in time with the beat – it's all shown at the top of the screen – to play along with the insanely catchy tune.



▵ **That's how your cake is supposed to look. Ours, well, didn't.**



▵ **You're rated on how successful – what's THIS? *More* starving kids?**



▵ **You can dress your Tamagotchi. We've gone for the lab coat look.**



▵ **This is super-hard at first, but big fun.**

certain discipline. The dentists, for example, means you need to brush teeth, drill holes in teeth and generally do your best to be Laurence Olivier in Marathon Man (minus the torture and sadism). The cleaners, meanwhile, lets you spin washing machines by hand, iron and remove stains, and so it goes. It sounds like terrible drudgery, but it's actually brilliantly done, all using the stylus and touch screen. Especially good is the bemani-style rhythm action of the music store, which at first is brain-scramblingly complicated but soon becomes a joy, complete with horns, parp noises and hand claps.

Despite all of this, though, the game squanders its joyfulness through constant, soul-scouring repetition. Every time you enter a store you need to perform a long number of services for each paying customer – complete them and you'll get to upgrade your store. Enter the store again and further elements and complications are added to the given activities – for instance, we only got the option to give injections once the dentists had risen to three storeys. As such, variety is only ever gained in a piecemeal fashion, and while each store activity is brilliantly realised, doing the same thing over and over takes its toll.

And yet… it's all so charmingly presented, it's hard to begrudge the game its shortfalls. The wonderfully simple and deceptively shambolic cartoon visuals are complemented perfectly by a deadpan and witty script, and the music is (mostly) simultaneously catchy and soothing. Ultimately, this is probably one for the young 'uns, but it remains a cute little time waster no matter what your age.

JES BICKHAM

> **"IT IS PERHAPS SIMPLE, BUT IS BUTTRESSED BY FUN GLAND-MASSAGING MINIGAMERY"**



DOWNLOAD DOINGS

Tamagotchi Connection Corner Shop offers a modest amount of wireless fun. You can trade gifts with friends, or download a demo of the game to a Tamagotchi-less DS, and doing so nabs you some virtual cash to spend on your wee pet. There's no actual multiplayer fun, though.

+

- Some excellent use of the touch screen.
- Will charm your socks off.

–

- Highly, *really* repetitive.
- You'll get bored fairly quickly.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Nintendogs
Nintendo
NGC/116, 88%
Superior virtual pet thing with touchy-feely qualities for mums and girlies.



6 VISUALS

Incredibly basic, but full of lumpen, innocent charm.

6 SOUNDS

Wonderful guitar melodies rub shoulders with irritating tunes.

6 MASTERY

Excels in making use of the touch screen, but it's very simple.

7 LIFESPAN

Youngsters will get more mileage; it's too repetitive for oldsters.

VERDICT

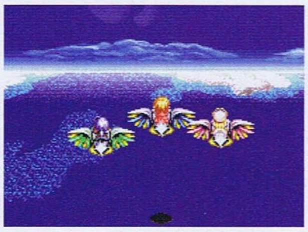
Simple, wistful, funny and charming, yet grindingly tedious at the same time. A curious contradiction – but fun.

NGC 69





△ You're frighteningly embiggened on the map screen. You move around a lot quicker when you've got seven-league legs.



△ Fly! Fly, my pretties! Fly to a world of stats and random battles!



△ Expect to see lots of this sort of thing. Not a great holiday spot.



△ Different directions on the D-pad can be used for different attacks.



△ Ah, the blue magical sparkles that denote a none-more-dead bird.



△ Gald, of course, is like gold, but there's an 'o' shortage in Phantasia.





△ Yep, he's called 'Cress'. Hmm.



△ Honestly, you wander into the Bugbears' natural habitat, and you're surprised when they attack? WHAT IS WRONG WITH THESE PEOPLE?

TALES OF PHANTASIA

Like random battles? Then you'll love this.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	NAMCO
OUT	NOW
PLAYERS	1
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE-CART LINK	NO
COST	£30



Here's yet another SNES game reanimated to dance for our pleasure. Just like *Secret of Mana* and *Final Fantasy IV Advance*, this is another sprawling RPG from the distant past, plucked from its 16-bit grave and shoehorned into the GBA, brought back to life by the sheer power of nostalgia. To trot out an unforgiveably clichéd phrase, if you love RPGs, then this will be a real treat. If you don't, well, the wealth of random battles and party-massaging combat will be about as exciting as an evening in a bath of cold baked beans with Pat Butcher, wearing nothing but her enormous earrings. Yoink.

It's the usual story; village gets destroyed, young boy seeks revenge. The twist here is that the battles are real-time, not turn-based, and you can give your party members orders in combat, ranging from formation to what abilities they should use, meaning that there's a pleasing level of strategy involved.

But it's terribly unforgiving; the early battles – and there are plenty of random encounters as you wander around the game world – can be tough as nails, and the enjoyment of simply exploring is often spoilt by yet another scuffle with Bugbears or Giant Bees. Thankfully, though, it doesn't take too long to increase your level. Things also get interesting with the ability to 'cook'; essentially combining items to create your own potions and foods.

> **"IF YOU GIVE IT TIME TO UNFOLD YOU'LL FIND AN ENGROSSING EXPERIENCE"**

We can't in all honesty recommend *Tales of Phantasia* to those of you who aren't in the least bit interested in levelling-up and smacking goblins, but for players who relish the GBA's function as an archive of classic SNES RPGs , this will offer many rewarding hours of fun. If you give it time to unfold you'll find an engrossing experience. It also offers more than just a mere port, as it's a combination of the original and the PSone remake, with a few new quests thrown in.

JES BICKHAM

+

- Sprawling RPG.
- Mixture of the original and the PSone remake.

–

- Tough and unforgiving.
- Takes a while to get going.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Final Fantasy IV Advance
Nintendo
NGC/116, 87%
Another old-but-fine RPG resurrected for the GBA.



6 VISUALS
Not without charm, but old and clunky and it shows.

7 SOUNDS
Lots of tunes and there's even voice-acting.

7 MASTERY
It's pretty big and the real-time combat works nicely.

7 LIFESPAN
If you don't get bored, there's a lot of game to love.

VERDICT
More old-school goblin-bashing resurrected for the GBA. Not to everyone's tastes, but good nonetheless.

NGC 75

"Domestic drudge prevents D-I-V-O-R-C-E"



△ The Chibister stores all the rubbish in his little metal head, till he finds a bin.



NGC STAR GAME

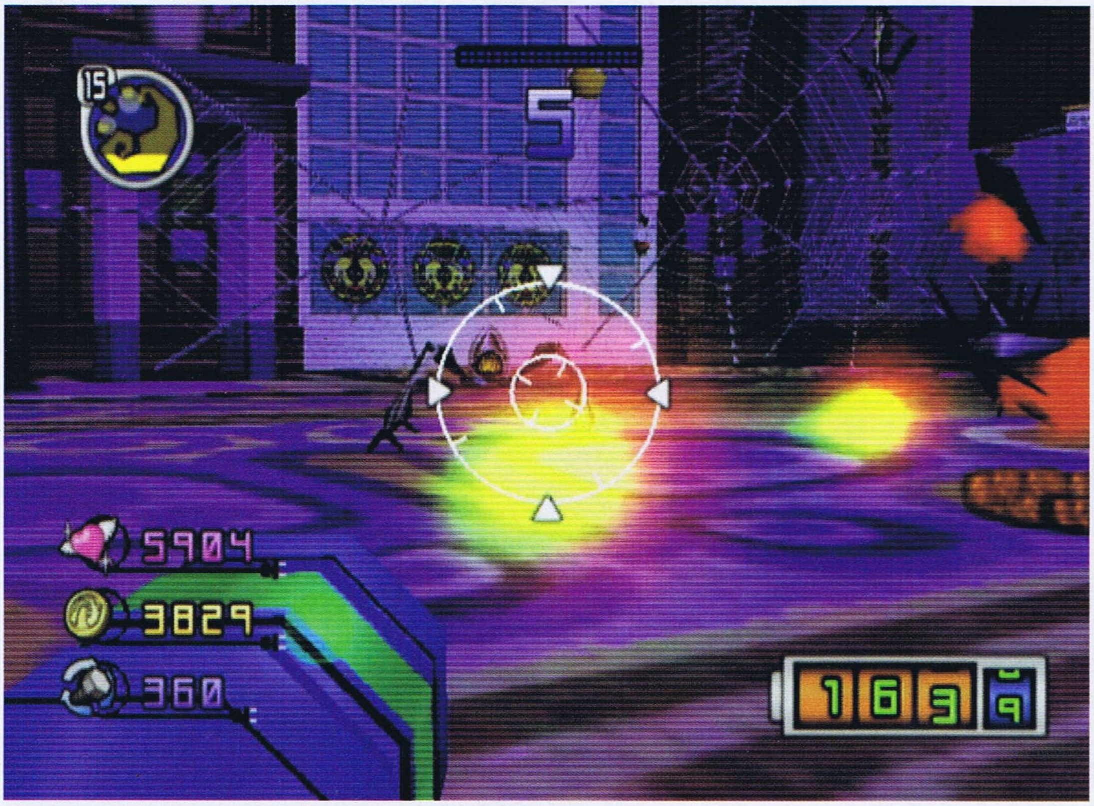
CHIBI-ROBO
PLUG INTO ADVENTURE

Somehow life in this soap opera is always a joy and never a chore. That's what happens when your main goal is to spread happiness…





The best things in life are twee



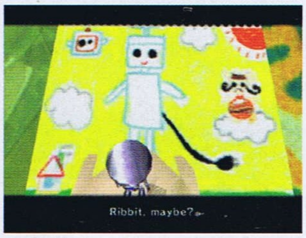
△ **Invading robotic spiders… Why did it have to be invading robotic spiders?**



△ **Why not relax with Daily Mail TV?**



△ **Dad's fashion is pure 80s.**

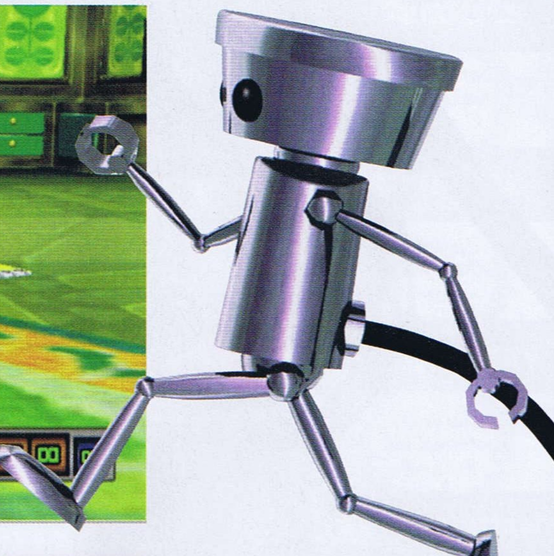


△ **If this doesn't make you smile, YOU ARE DEAD ON THE INSIDE SIR!**



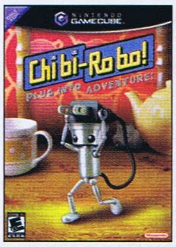






INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	SKIP LTD
RELEASE DATE	26 MAY
PLAYERS	1
MEM CARD PAGES	6
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
PRICE	£30



Meet the Sandersons. Meet the husband driven to indolence and depression by unemployment, reduced to living vicariously through a cartoon superhero and frittering away the family's meagre funds on toys and trinkets. Meet their daughter who sits silently in a frog costume, preferring later life on the psychiatrist's couch to confronting her parents' break-up. Meet the wife who locks herself in the bedroom all day and whose only friend is three inches long and battery powered.

They all reside in a house that is truly only a home to the rat and the pig, for this suburban semi is covered in crumbs, strewn with wrappers and mired in muck. And into this world of filth and Mike Leigh sub-plot off-cuts comes an adorable little robot with the simple aim of spreading happiness through good deeds and spotless floors.

> **"INTO THIS WORLD OF FILTH AND MIKE LEIGH OFF-CUTS COMES AN ADORABLE ROBOT"**

And that is *Chibi-Robo*, a game where cleanliness is next to godliness, hygiene lives adjacent to happiness and a thoroughly Shake 'N' Vac-ed rug shares a maisonette with marital bliss. And not only does the droid spending his days as a domestic drudge prevent D-I-V-O-R-C-E, but the Happy Points earnt will also fend off a robot spider invasion, solve the mystery of the mechanoid in the basement and upgrade our hero himself into Super Chibi-Robo.

The mechanics of Chibi's squeaky clean existence are simple enough: the metal maid polishes and explores



TEMPLE OF BROOM

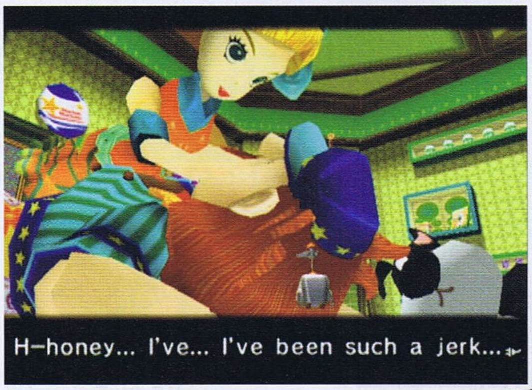
Chibi's ultimate aim (aside from spreading happiness) is to become the always-charged Super Chibi-Robo. You can earn Happiness Points to achieve this by cleaning, although the big scores come when you complete the side missions.

"Smiles generated just by existing"

MARTIAN SHEEN

Even Chibi has his foes – a race of robotic arachnids known as the Spydorz. These metal horrors attack at random but Chibi can swiftly dispatch them all with just one shot from his auto-targetting Chibi Blaster. He can also use them for spares.





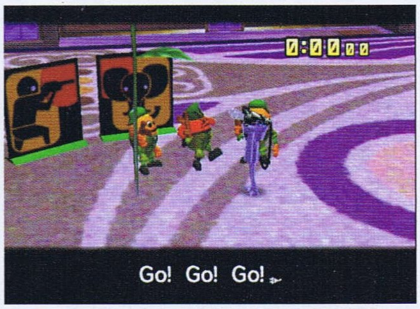
△ Freed from cleaning, the Sandersons have time for other 'pursuits'.



△ It may sometimes feel a little more laboured than is strictly needed, but clambering over the furniture and climbing cords is the only way to explore those higher shelves.



△ The bug-eyed Telly is Chibi's guide, manager and mouth. No talking paperclips here…



△ The Free Rangers let you train with them for ten mini-missions. Go! Go! Go!



the Sandersons' house in two chunks: day and night. During the waking hours, the world belongs to the bickering humans, but once twilight comes, a group of Pixar-inspired stuffed animals takes over. Once each lunar cycle ends, little Chibi returns to his house to receive his rewards, buy any upgrades required and recharge his battery.

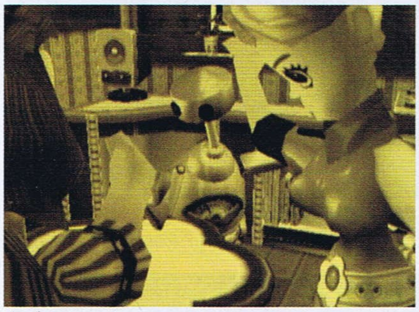
And the metal Womble needs this jolt of AC, for the voltage in his cell dictates how far he can go. But through cleaning, recovering lost items and playing cupid in the toys' various love triangles, the Chibister can climb the robot rankings and so enhance his charge, improve life for his charges and roam further between socket visits. This then opens up new rooms in the house and uncovers a whole battery of side missions.

Just like his metal claws, *Chibi-Robo* is as soft as your face. Since there are no time limits to rush you or set-pieces to interrupt the exploration, the pace is yours to set. The platforming is unchallenging, the puzzles

"HIS BLINKING EYES MAKE HIM A CHAPLIN-LIKE CHAMELEON, MISCHIEVOUS AND COMEDIC"



Chibi hams up his injuries to try and get another hug from mum. Scrubber! Still, this is quite heart warmingly cute if you can set your cynicism to one side for a few hours.



Chibi's travelled into the past! It's sepia.



Every home needs a robot's touch.



Suck up the water and you can use it to blast the stains off walls.



Captain Plankbeard... speaks too slowly... and has the most annoying voice. Ever.

predictable, and thanks to Chibi's built in 'copter, any falls are rarely fatal. If you do fail, all you need do is wait for the sun to rise again.

This feeling of time stretching out before you should be familiar to anyone who has moved to *Animal Crossing* recently. Those villagers will also be familiar with the way that the residents of the Sandersons' home speak using the same squeaky nonsensical scat style that Nook et al also mutter in. But the most obvious comparison is the shared joy of daily discovery, the smiles generated just by existing, the delight found in even the most mundane jobs.

For while life with Chibi is cyclical and often slow, there is genuine warmth and wonder in simply scrambling around the bedroom, helping dad cook and playing only to please the other characters, rather than counting your own progress in corpses.

And it is largely Chibi himself who creates this air of permanent sunshine because he exudes charm like WD40. Remaining steadfastly silent, his blank, blinking eyes make him a Chaplin-like chameleon, able to change from mischievous to sentimental or comedic as easily as he changes costumes. And with his lips sealed, Chibi relies on some wonderful spot effects; each step he takes triggers a plinking piano, each brush stroke is accompanied by a flourish of Spanish guitar. And it is these little audio rewards combined



SOCKET AND SEE

Everything Chibi does drains power from his battery: walking, sweeping, floating and even standing still. So at first you need to make sure that you know where the plugs are, and don't stroll too far unless you can make it back in time.

KISS, KISS, CILLIT BANG!

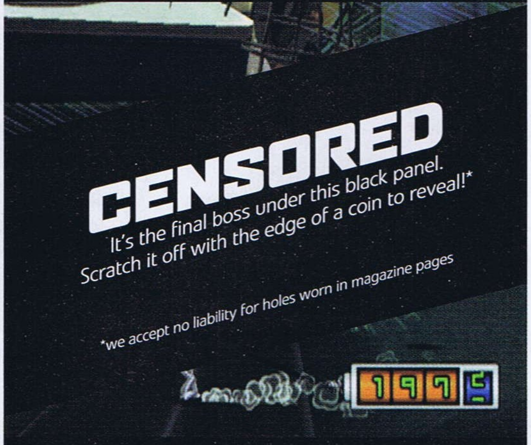
Chibi's days are all of a similar fashion – with his talkative chum Telly Vision explaining how last night's cleansing activities have raised the robot up the Chibi-list – think of it as a mixture between a Telethon and Bagpuss.



Every day the family seems to have created an almost identical level of filth with wrappers and papers being scattered in exactly the same places around the home. The only changes are in the amount of muddy footprints that Tao the dog has traipsed across the floor.



With the cleaning and sweeping out of the way, Chibi can set about an extra task such as finding the nine lost frog rings. Uncovering each one and handing them to Jenny will get him more Happy Points than any old scrubbing.



To put a little bang into his final day, Chibi has to fend off *[bzzzzt – error! Ed]* on his own! Luckily, dad has upgraded his blaster, which means Chibi's not automatically destroyed and sold on Ebay.

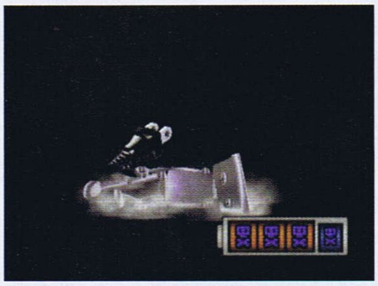
"A Mr Sheen of delight"



△ Look, he's dressed up as a little frog.



△ Now he's posing as a Space Ranger.



△ Let the caterwauling commence! Chibi's battery is flat – he is dead!

THE DIRT DEVIL INSIDE

The house is home to more than just people…



The Sandersons are dysfunctional but ultimately sweet, with each one adoring Chibi in their own particular way.



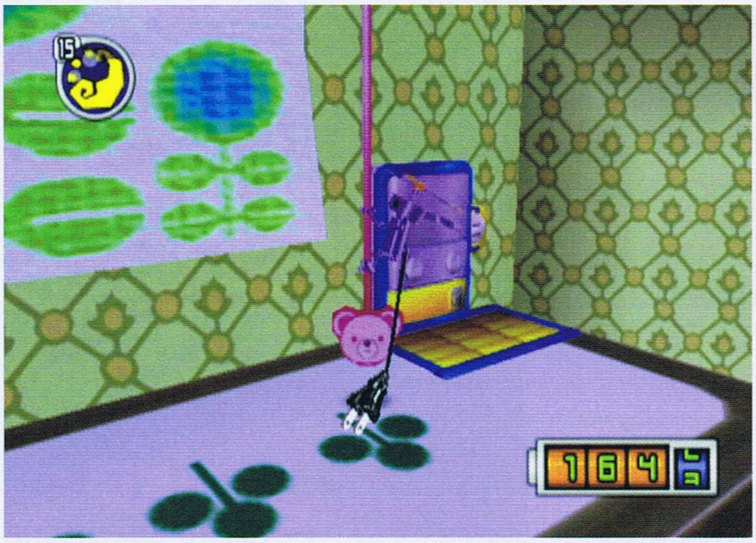
He believes he's a Space Ranger and he gets all the best lines: Drake Redcrest is our hero.



Space Aliens from the garden give you access to their time-travelling technology. As opposed to eating your brains.



Sophie is in love with Drake, but she's actually the dog's plaything and is entirely covered in slobber.



△ The head-mounted helicopter will stop any fall being fatal.



△ Always know where the nearest plug is.



△ Unionise, man! Go for minimum wage!



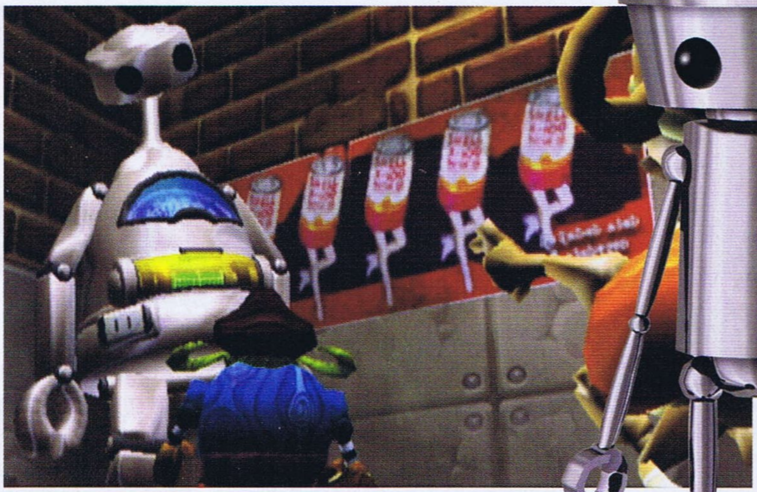
with El Chibirino's delightful animation that almost make even the most mundane jobs worth persisting with.

This Mr Sheen of delight also insulates you against the game's little failings. Charmed by Chibi, you'll forgive the camera showing you the inside of a lampshade rather than our hero shinning up a flex. You'll claim it doesn't really matter because you have plenty of time to adjust the angle with the C-stick. You probably won't mind the slowly scrolling dialogue as there has been real care lavished on the lines – particularly for the Buzz Lightyear-alike, Space Hunter Drake Redcrest. Anyway, why would your eyes notice that the most of the backdrops are slightly bland and the character models chunky when the soapy story is nourishing your very soul?

However, most of *Chibi-Robo!*'s more noticeable problems actually stem from its greatest strengths: the scale of our hero, the day/night cycle and the open-ended gameplay. The first problem is obvious: Chibi is shiny but tiny and the house is big, so getting around is a slow process (especially when stairs are involved). That each sun set and rise sees you returned to the living room can be exasperating, even if the teleports alleviate the problem later on.

The sheer number of side missions and additional tasks also cause their own problems. For while the philosophical musings of Mort the Gallic mummy and Drake's existentialist crises are wonderful,

The best things in life are twee



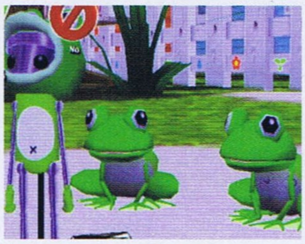


Δ The makers of *Toy Story* will be getting lawyered up over this camp dino.

Δ Fixing your predecessor takes almost all of your money. And is he grateful? Who knows – he's mute too.



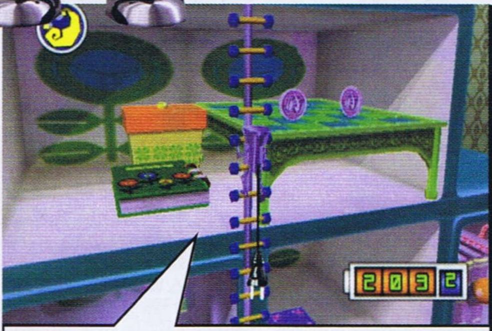
Δ Sunshine's got the chills again and there's still no sign of his 'man'.



Δ The little frogs looked on adoringly, together, ba-ii-yaaa...



Δ Where are Tokyo social services? These people never change their clothes and their house has no bathroom facilities.



AJAX IN THE BOX

Recycling the bones of dead Spydorz, Chibi can fashion himself a number of extra devices to aid his quest for dirt. Portable ladders and bridges make certain surfaces (such as sofas, beds, coffee tables etc) easier to reach, while the teleports take the strain out of getting around. Sadly, using each one drains your battery.

they do confuse the issue of which tasks will actually advance the plot. Occasionally you're reduced to making the odd logical leap or talking to other characters just to see if the changing of day has advanced the tale.

Finally, things do slow as you near the end of the main tale. The lack of new locations, items to buy and faces to meet negates some of the need to clean or explore what drove all of your earlier actions. And so your last few 'days and nights' in the house will often feel mildly frustrating, especially if you are waiting for an certain item – such as the bone – to turn up.

However, the fact you won't be able to wait to see the final climactic scenes is a testament to the way that Chibi and the Sanderson family burrow into your heart and set up home there. For when the end does come, you'll at first feel elated and delighted, but then hollow as you realise that the game is over. Except *Chibi-Robo!* doesn't work that way and soon you'll be cleaning again, now intent on aiding Sophie in her quest for love or helping Sunshine the junkie-bear go cold turkey.

Buy *Chibi-Robo* and you simply can't lose. You *literally* cannot lose because this is a fantastically easy game that even a toddler could complete. But that doesn't make it a title aimed at the young: it's too sophisticated, too charming, too elegant to be wasted on sticky-fingered simpletons. They won't understand the jokes, they won't appreciate the design, they won't feel the robo-love. And neither will those flint-hearted fools who expect their robots to have guns not souls, because *Chibi-Robo* isn't a game just for completists, cultist or connoisseurs, it's for anyone who appreciates the finer things.

ALEX COOKE

"THIS IS A FANTASTICALLY EASY GAME, BUT IT DOESN'T MEAN IT'S AIMED AT THE YOUNG"



SEE YOU AT THE BLEACH

To divert you from the main game, there are hundred of side tasks: you can join the ranks of the hard boiled Free Rangers unit, rehydrate lost frogs, search for cash-filled rooms, find a ship for a pirate or rescue a princess. Amazingly, you'll want to do all of them. Twice.

+

- Chibi himself is cute, clever and funny. Without speaking.
- Great cast and story.

–

- The lack of new items makes the end slowish.
- The camera can wander off sometimes.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life
Ubisoft
NGC/91 91%
Another one where the beauty's in the mundanity.



8 VISUALS

Chibi's great and the characters are vivid but it's quite simple.

9 SOUNDS

A nice little soundtrack with wonderful spot effects for every step.

7 MASTERY

Solid enough but could do with a little more visual polish at times.

8 LIFESPAN

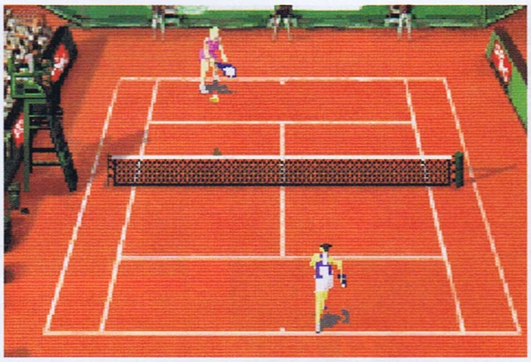
There's a full 15 hours of main game plus five more of extras.

VERDICT

If you buy into the weirdness and air of wonder you'll find this as soothing as it is soulful.

NGC 90

"Good old trial and error"



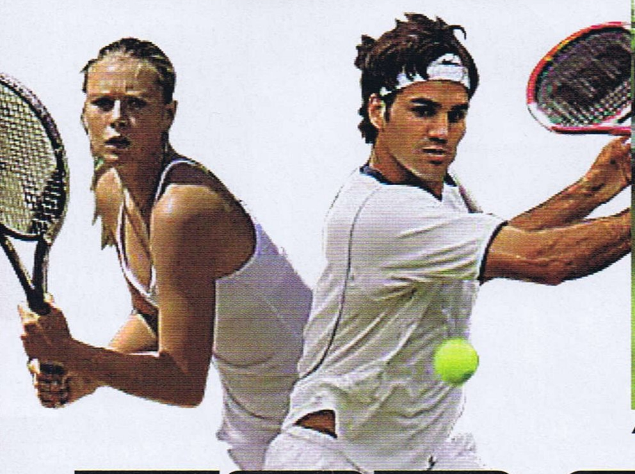
△ Player models are digitised and turned into sprites. Fact!







△ Rapid tapping of the buttons is the easiest way to guarantee a hit.





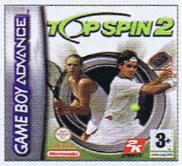
△ Well, the tennis court in *our* back yard isn't purple. No class. No class at all.

TOP SPIN 2

The GBA equivalent of a mid-match protest.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	2K SPORTS
DEVELOPER	MAGIC POCKETS
OUT	NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE-CART LINK	NO
COST	£30



Have you ever played something so painfully unresponsive that you thought your controller must be broken? It happens all the time round here, mainly because half of our controllers actually *are* broken (that's what comes from letting Mark Green anywhere near them) but rarely in a finished, reviewable GBA game.

Our first hour with *Top Spin 2* left us incredulous and pretty much pointless. We took it to people who are better than us at gaming, in the hope that some genius would be able to show us how to play it, but nobody managed to get so much as a rally going. Yes, things did eventually improve, but a tennis game that leaves first-time players throwing air shots or – more often – having button-presses completely ignored by the computer… That's special.

There seems to be a brief window of opportunity for activating the shot animation. Press the button too early or too late and absolutely nothing happens – there's no visual feedback to let you know the computer understood your instructions or why it opted to disregard them. Finding the sweet spot is down to good old trial and error, and is made no easier by the slightly jerky graphics.

It could be that our trouble with *Top Spin 2* stems from its hardcore difficulty level, because on the rare occasions we did manage to get 'in the zone' there were some decent moments. But you shouldn't have to wrestle with a game in order to squeeze a little fun out of it. For 30 quid, it's not unreasonable to expect some proper entertainment. Yes, it's only a GBA, but if *Mario Tennis* can be immediately accessible and still provide players with a long-term challenge using the same tools, there's no excuse for the likes of *Top Spin 2*.

"YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TO WRESTLE WITH A GAME IN ORDER TO SQUEEZE FUN OUT"

MARTIN KITTS

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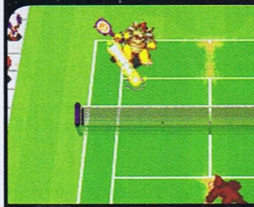
- Plenty of tournaments.
- Training games.

–

- Unresponsive controls.
- Jerky movement.
- Frustrating difficulty.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Mario Tennis
Nintendo
NGC/113, 4/5
So much better, it might as well be from a different universe.



5 VISUALS
Not the smoothest, as far as animation goes.

6 SOUNDS
Bit of speech, bit of thwocky noise, cheapo rock music.

3 MASTERY
Way too fiddly for a GBA game. Mario would not approve.

5 LIFESPAN
We got tired of wrestling with the controls. Try before you buy.

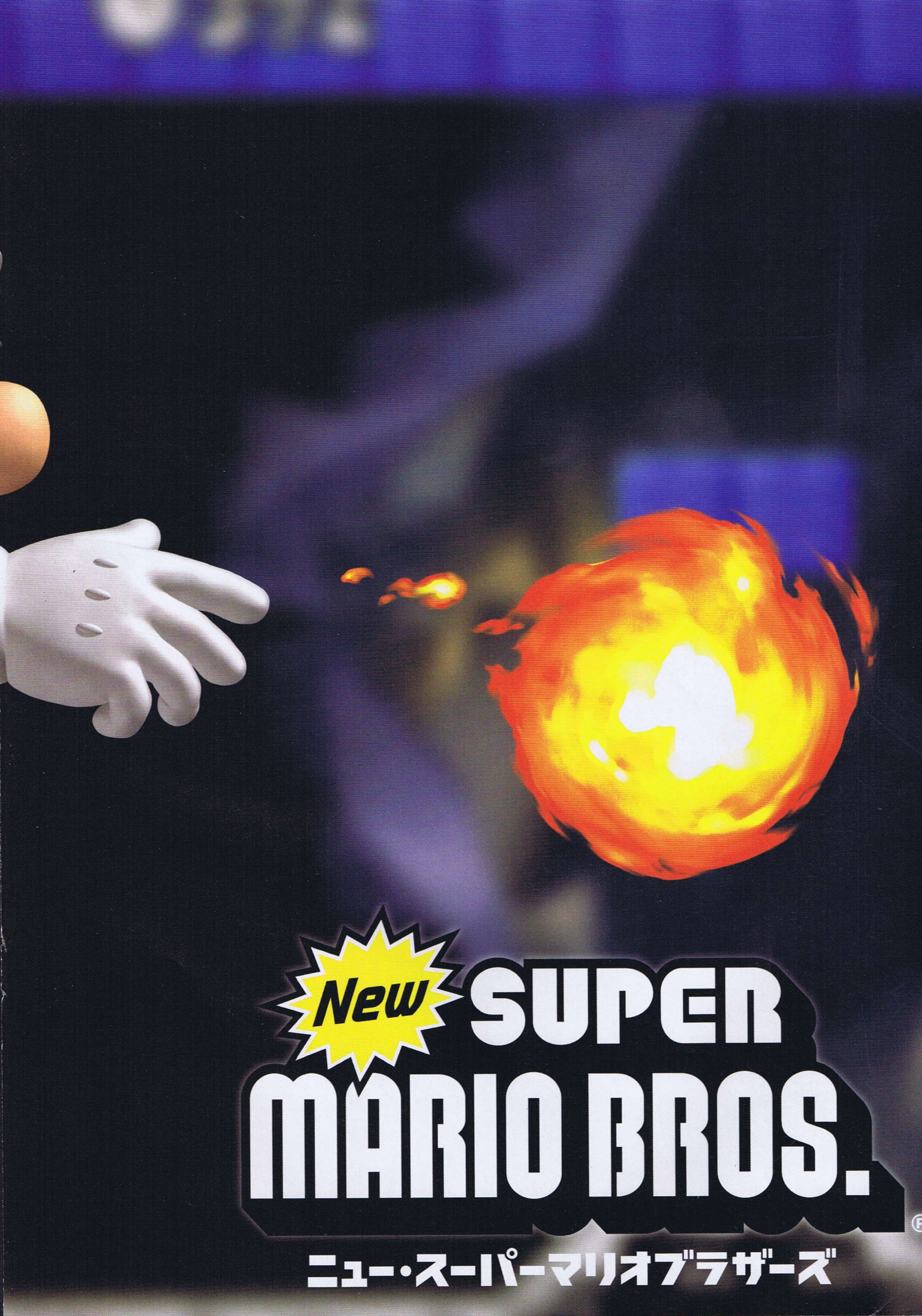
VERDICT
You wouldn't believe hitting a ball could be so annoying. Go out and get *Mario Tennis* instead.

NGC 40


NGC
INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING

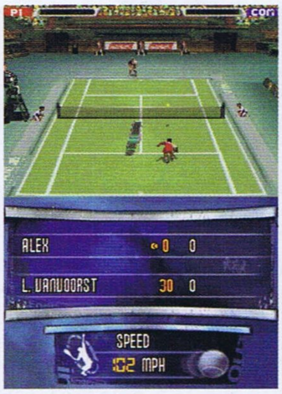

Yoot Saito's
Odama™


任天道


New SUPER MARIO BROS.
ニュー・スーパーマリオブラザーズ



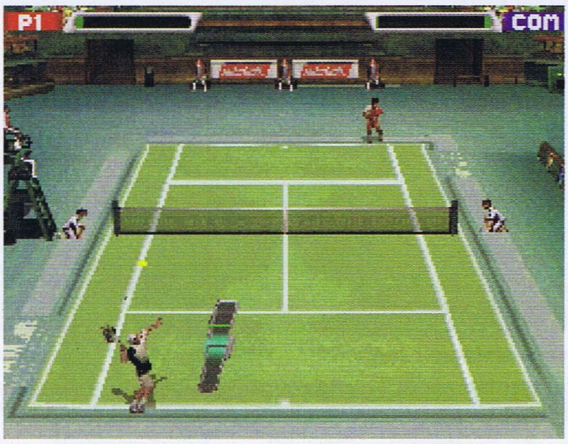
It's over the line but is it on the level?



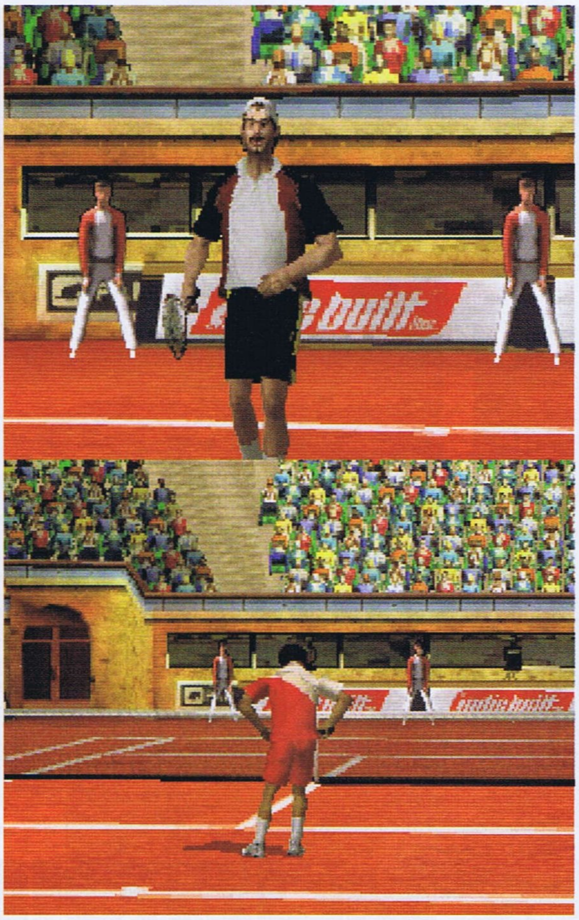
△ Zoom out to make power bars smaller and the game harder.



△ The player models border on scary, as do the women.



△ So far, all of the motionless ballboys have steadfastly refused to be hit by our slightly unfocused volleying. Bah...



△ There is a noticeable difference in the speed of the four different court surfaces available in the game.

TOP SPIN 2

Harder than a Sampras serve, and nearly as hairy...

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	TAKE 2 INTERACTIVE
DEVELOPER	PAM
OUT	7 MARCH
PLAYERS	1-2
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE-CART LINK	YES
WIFI	YES
MIC	NO
COST	£30



Becoming addicted usually involves some kind of intense joy, a dizzying high or an inflated sense of self worth. There has to be an 'up' before the 'down' comes. Not with *Top Spin 2*, however. Its habit-forming hook comes from the way it grinds you into the clay, chafes your knees on the concrete and kicks clods of grass in your face, singing "I'm better than Federer/Ner-ner-na-ner-nerrr."

It's hard to win. It's not hard to rally, run, volley or serve – just hard to win. All you need to get the ball across the net are the four face buttons. Press any one and run towards the ball, and your player will lob, stroke, backhand or smash it to your opponent automatically.

But, in order to earn points, you'll need to draw your opponent into the net, or bounce a passing shot down the line, and that demands real precision. Instead of timing the button presses for when the ball reaches your racquet, this impressively realistic game demands that you watch a rising power bar and add D-pad direction to the stroke. It's a skill that can be tricky enough to master in the heat of a tiebreaker, but one that is made even more difficult by the game's refusal to include any training levels or tuition beyond a few novelty options.

> **"IT'S HARD TO WIN. IT'S NOT HARD TO SERVE, RALLY OR RUN – JUST HARD TO WIN"**

It isn't the complexity of the stroke selection that fails this game. In fact, the high demands on your dexterity imbue every set-winning success with a feeling of elation, and even single point gains make you sigh with satisfaction. But what these fleeting moments of delight don't mask is just how thin the options are. Apart from the decent Exhibition or Career modes, there is almost nothing else to stop you feeling frustrated by your inability to replicate those incredibly elegant drop-shots with the robotic precision the game requires.

Top Spin 2 is a rewarding, challenging and compelling sim, but once you come off the grass, it can be as punishingly serious and uncharismatic as an Andrew Murray interview.

ALEX COOKE

+

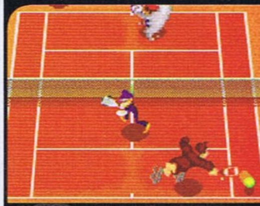
- The feeling of actually winning.
- 16 real-world players.

–

- The lack of tutorials.
- Little to explore after the game.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Mario Tennis: Power Tour
Nintendo
NGC/101, 4/5
Slightly less serious, but the amount of RPG elements and mini-games make it really last.



7 VISUALS
Not astonishingly pretty but the animation is good.

7 SOUNDS
Good crowd noises but a touch of blah in the speech.

6 MASTERY
Touch screen only used for menus, but overall it's demanding of the DS.

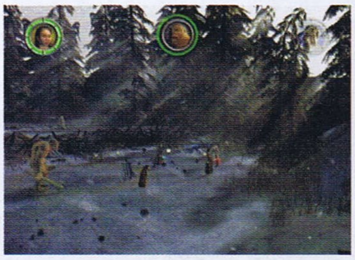
6 LIFESPAN
Hit hard by lack of tutorials, and modes beyond the matches.

VERDICT
Harder to put down than a much-loved but aging family dog, yet it demands real dedication to yield any actual joy.

NGC 70

"Mighty wood-crushing, door-splintering fists"









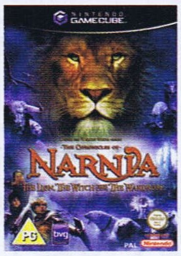
△ The levels set in the snowbound Narnia are really quite pretty indeed.

THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

Lions and witches and fauns, oh my!

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	BUENA VISTA
DEVELOPER	TRAVELLER'S TALES
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
MEM CARD PAGES	7
GBA LINK UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40



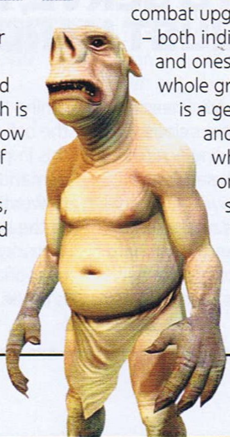
Taking its cue from EA's *The Two Towers* and *Return of the King* games, *The Chronicles of Narnia* is a hefty slice of post-*Rings* goblin-skewering. It follows roughly the same format as the Hobbit-bothering slash-'em-ups, allowing the player to recreate the adventures of the Pevensie children by swinging young Lucy around for use as a makeshift battering ram, or bashing down doors with Peter's mighty wood-crushing, door-splintering fists. We're not sure it's all exactly true to the letter of CS Lewis's works, but in the videogame of the film of the book, it'd seem that anything goes.

"YOU GET TO SWING YOUNG LUCY AROUND TO USE AS A MAKESHIFT BATTERING RAM"

So yep, there's a lot of fighting in here. But it's leavened with a huge amount of variety: each of the four Pevensies has their own skills and abilities, and you're required to use them many times within a given level. You can also team up with the other children for specific moves – hence the aforementioned Lucy-swinging attack, which is patently absurd but somehow believable in the confines of the game – that allow you to break through rock walls, or fire bows on the run, and so on. Switching between the kids is simply a case of tapping R, and doing so to utilise their manifold abilities is quick and easy – just as it should be. As such, the game asks you to constantly be doing different things, even if for much of the time you're also having to batter Boggles with sticks and swords.

Added to all this is the vast selection of moves that can be bought between levels. Each level of the game contains loads of different things to collect, and the many tokens that are dotted around can be cashed in for combat upgrades and more – both individual abilities and ones that benefit the whole group. The result is a generous game, and one that does a whole lot to expand on its otherwise straightforward puzzle-and-bash gameplay.

And it looks splendid. The



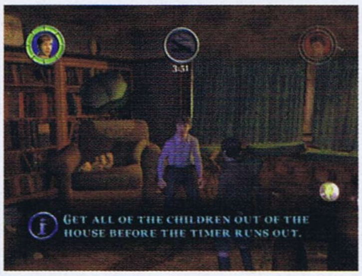


TOFFS TOGETHER

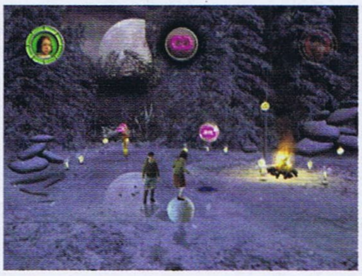
Rather excellently, a second player can jump in to the game at any point during play for some co-operative fun, meaning that two chums can spend quality time hacking monsters to bits together as the posho Pevensies. It's a great little function, just like the one in Lego Star Wars. Just don't be upset if you get to play as Lucy. Be thankful you're not one of the fuss-budget beaver clan…

THROUGH THE WARDROBE...

A few of the things you'll be doing in Narnia.



AIR RAID
The first level sees you trying to escape the Pevensie's London home during a bombing. Here's you'll get used to the children's peculiar abilities – Peter can punch down doors with *just his fists*. Not bad for a youngster, eh? Not bad at all.



OH, MR TUMNUS!
Your first taste of Narnia sees you playing as both Lucy and Edmund, and is an introduction into how the use of each character's abilities can lead to progression. Your first thought will probably be: what a lot of things to collect.



WATER SPORTS
This level's great – fend off attacks by rampaging wolves while trying to break an ice-sheathed waterfall. Once it's cracked, so to speak, the ensuing cascade sweeps you away down river on a handy ice raft, while riverside beasts try to stymie your progress.



ICE TO SEE YOU
Here, Susan's creeping around the White Witch's castle, freeing all the statues so Aslan can bring 'em back to life. Susan's got Mr Tumnus's pan pipes, so in a Zelda-style twist, she can play music at certain areas to, for instance, send enemies to sleep.



THE BIG FIGHT
Despite the late-game increase in fisticuffs, the Battle of Beruna level is quite a sight – armies of beast-men marching in the background while you try to repel advancing giants with bundles of sticks. Yup, *bundles of sticks*. Crazy.



EXTRA, EXTRA!
After you've finished the game, there's an insanely generous amount of extras to unlock and watch, from DVD-style behind-the-scenes documentaries to bonus levels and more. How they've managed to fit it all on a tiny Gamecube disc is beyond us.

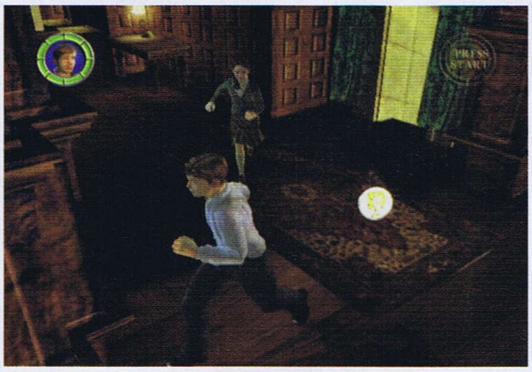


△ **Peter's 'meat coat' was neither practical nor wolf-repellent.**

presentation verges on the extraordinary at times: the snowbound levels are wonderfully atmospheric, and later on legions of minotaurs and giants stride past in the background, fully giving the impression that you're part of an enormous conflict. And it's not all fantasy, either – the first level sees you escaping the Pevensie house during the Blitz, and there's a romp through Professor Kirke's mansion.

Sadly, the game loses its way in the later levels, devolving into overly difficult and repetitive combat. Granted, it allows you to make full use of all those powers and abilities you've bought, but it nonetheless becomes something of a grind and loses a lot of charm as a result. For youngsters this may not be much of a problem, but for the rest of us it means that this trip through the wardrobe isn't as magical as it could be.

JES BICKHAM





△ **A tap of Y teams up your posh gutternsipes for some Lucy-twirling action. Use her to batter down obstacles!**

+
- Looks gorgeous.
- Huge wealth of moves and abilities.
- Co-op mode.

–
- Devolves into relentless combat.
- Initial charm wears off quickly.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...
LotR: Return of the King
EA
NGC/87, 86%
Similarly fab looking and more exciting but less varied than *Chronicles of Narnia*.



8 VISUALS
Polished and pleasing. The snowy levels are lovely.

8 SOUNDS
Lots of voice acting and sweeping orchestral music.

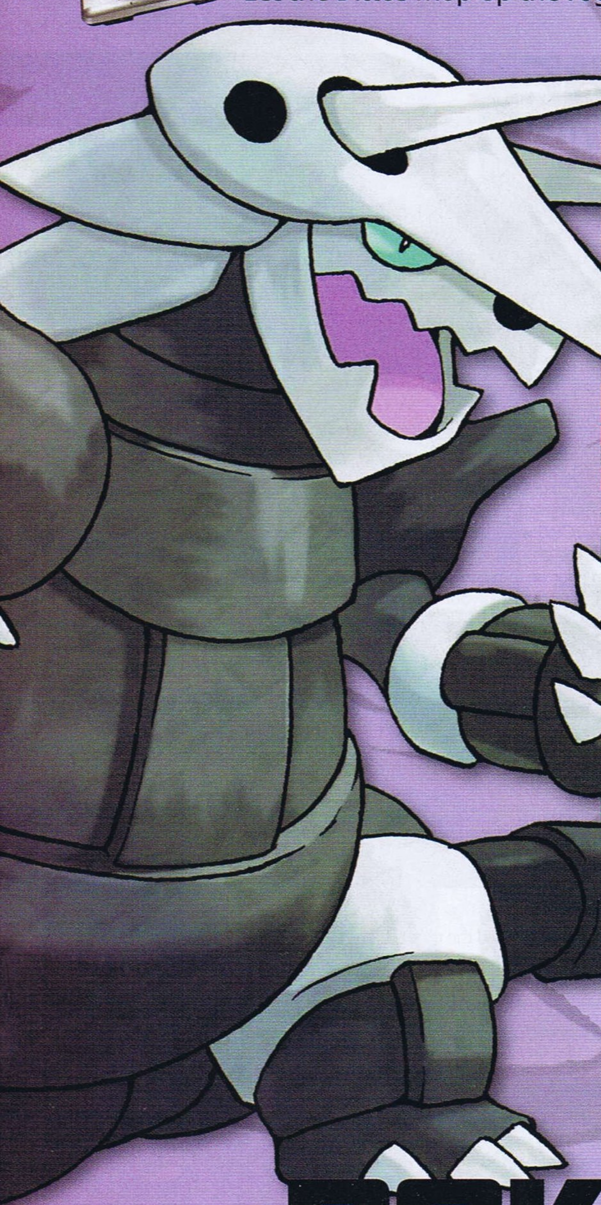
7 MASTERY
Constant action that doesn't hitch or hiccup.

7 LIFESPAN
Big enough, but later levels are less engaging.

VERDICT
Knock 10% off if you're over 12, but this is a varied slice of knockabout *Narnia*. Fun for all the family.

NGC 80

"Let the Dittos mop up the rogues"





△ Do they look the same to you?





△ Psyduck's looking a little lonely in there…

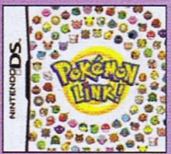


POKÉMON LINK

For some reason your snaggle-toothed face just seems to fit. Now, have you got four friends?

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	GENIUS SONORITY
RELEASE DATE	5 MAY
PLAYERS	1-4
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	YES
WI-FI	NO
MIC	NO
COST	£30



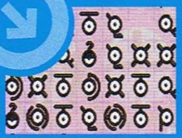
In contrast to their ease of play, explaining the rules of a puzzle game is usually akin to debating the causes of World War One through the medium of dance. But not with *Pokémon Link*, for this *Puzzle League*-alike has less twists and turns in it than the Second Battle of Ypres. And yet this very simplicity is also the game's greatest weakness.

In *Link*, a number of amputated Pokémon faces are poured into a jar and, by sliding the vertical columns and rows of creatures around, you are expected to create four-long lines of matching 'Mon, which then disappear. But here is the twist: reaching this vanishing point triggers a mode known as Link Chance which allows you to temporarily clear lines of three. And if you can create and clear one of those, you'll then get the chance to purge the screen of lines a mere two faces long.

While crafting these chains boosts your score somewhere into the stratosphere or beyond, you only have about two seconds to shuffle this Poké-marmalade about and create a new line before the mode ends and the jar is topped up again. And as you master this skill, *Link* makes a demanding diversion, dragging and slapping the creatures about, allowing you to concentrate on creating chains rather than merely surviving.

But this addiction is ephemeral because there isn't anything more to see or suss out. Okay, so a few bosses crop up to provide a nasty difficulty spike. They spoil your neatly crafted lines by blowing blocks about or turning the whole screen into silhouette, but apart from these odd moments, the game and the strategies that you need to win feel woefully undeveloped.

For the solo player there are just two options: Story and the almost pointless Endless mode. So while the multiplayer modes lend it a briefly competitive edge, you can't help but feel that something is missing. Where are the brain bending puzzles hinted at during the tutorial of the Story mode? Why not offer more for clearing the screen of solitary shapes? Where are the differently shaped jars, backdrops and novelty power-ups? Where is the rest of



SHAPE SHIFTER

If matching similarly coloured and contoured faces strikes you as too simple you can always pay some of your coins to play this extra in the Story mode. Matching four blobs is tricky enough but picking out three more in two seconds is hellish. We managed it, obviously.

POKÉMON LINK

Gelatinous blobs of various elusive shades



△ Rival trainers will lob rocks into your jar of Pokémon.



△ Look! Look! A different colour background! Woo-hoo!



△ There is a plot of some description going on, but we don't care.

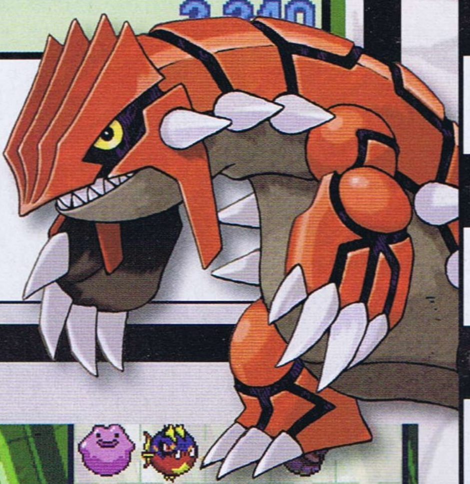


△ Endless mode just goes on… and on… until death has taken us all.



BLOCK PARTY

Here's how it goes: now that a line of Minuns has been pulled into place, it will vanish. And that, in turn, will pull down those Squirtles so they disappear next. Now you can use the stylus to start to pull any other pairs together – such as that group of Linoone – and let the Dittos mop up the rogues as they fall into place. Now that you understand how it works, do it again, and again, and again, and…



our £30's worth of game?

To combat this paucity of play there's the motivation to fulfil the series' motto and ensnare all 380 Pokémon. It's a hardcore task, though, and one that will only engage the truly committed, because in order to nab these unusual creatures you need a 'Link Chance a Ditto' to place next to your desired shape. And since these 'Mon (or 'gelatinous pink blobs', to call them by their proper name) are by their nature extremely rare, you are forced to rely on a mixture of good luck and dreadful persistence. Without any real variety in the modes or options, you end up repeatedly going through the same levels time and again, seeing the same Pokéy faces, hoping that no one asks you to explain why you're still playing.

ALEX COOKE

> **"YOU ONLY HAVE TWO SECONDS TO SHUFFLE THE POKÉ-MARMALADE AROUND"**



△ The easiest days are the ones when you're staring into the faces of a million tiny poké – wait. That's not true.

+

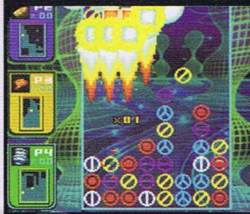
- Mildly addictive.
- Surprisingly good music.
- Nice anime art.

–

- Just two solo modes.
- Luck plays a hefty role.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Meteos
Bandai
NGC/108 89%
Greater complexity in a puzzler really pays off when it's this well handled.



6 VISUALS
Some Mons are too similar. Stylised but not spectacular.

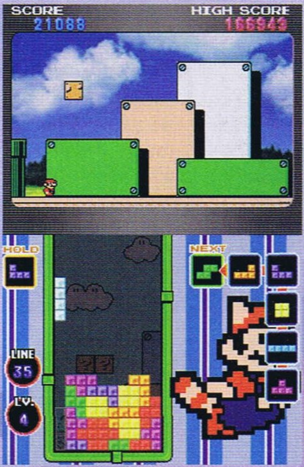
8 SOUNDS
Not as painful as most puzzlers. Which is a good thing.

7 MASTERY
An old theme with twists but a shortage of real substance.

6 LIFESPAN
Story mode gets very tricky but otherwise it's seriously empty.

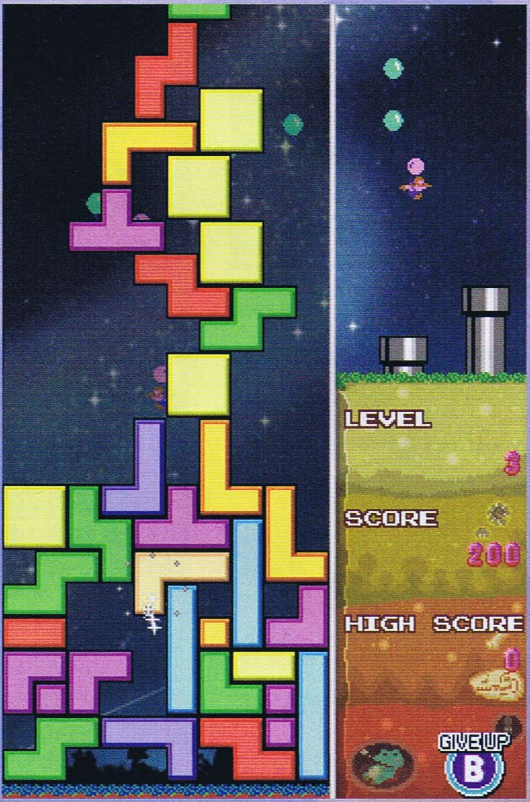
VERDICT
Immediately compelling and addictive but only short-term. It's enjoyable but there are already better options on DS.

NGC 78





△ Mission mode – you can play this in local multiplayer.



△ Touch mode – considerably more rubbish than it looks.

NGC STAR GAME

TETRIS DS

A place for everything, and everything in its place. Getting online with the puzzle game for obsessive compulsives…

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	NINTENDO
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-10
SAVE	ON CART
SINGLE CART LINK	YES
WI-FI	YES
MIC	NO
COST	£30



When *Tetris* walks into the room, *Zoo Keeper*, *Bust A Move* and all the rest fish their dinner money out of their pockets and hand it over, while staring respectfully at the floor. *Tetris* is the daddy of all puzzle games. You don't mess with the 'Tris.

If it wasn't for *Tetris*, none of the others would exist. Thanks to the kickstart it gave the original Game Boy, you might even say it's indirectly responsible for *Pokémon*, the Nintendo DS and the success of handheld gaming in general.

Recent versions have been published by THQ, so this is the first 'in house' Nintendo edition since the rather marvellous *New Tetris*, released for N64 almost seven years ago.

Tetris is a work of genius, but if there's one thing you can be certain of, it's that any modern revision of the game will include some needlessly tacked-on piece of flashiness to justify its price tag. *Tetris DS* one-ups every previous version by adding five additional modes to the original, perfect one.

Unsurprisingly, most of them aren't particularly amazing. Sticking stylus controls, rotating playfields and mission objectives in a game that was nigh-on flawless to begin with… Well, we can't imagine Alexey Pajitnov, Russian inventor of the very first *Tetris*, will look at Catch mode and wish he'd thought of it back in 1985. Then again, he did go on to design *Hatris*, so maybe the whole thing was a fluke.

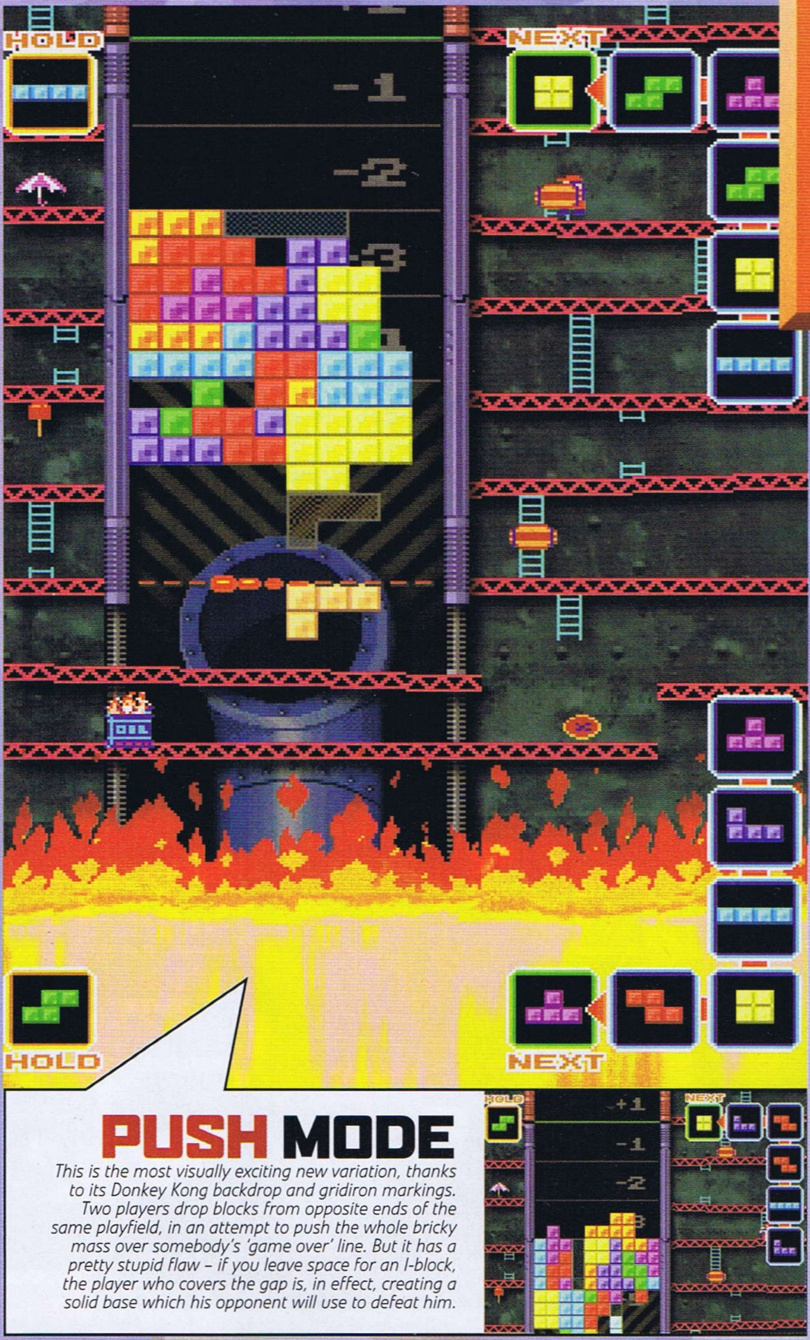
It's good to have a little variety, but some of the new bits – the Catch, Touch and Puzzle modes in

> "ONE-UPS EVERY PREVIOUS VERSION BY ADDING FIVE NEW MODES"



RATE ME

You get a rating based on your performance in Wi-Fi matches. The better you become, the more chance you'll have of being matched with better opponents, giving the chance to earn more points. It works fairly well. Games are a lot more fun when you're playing somebody of roughly equal ability.



PUSH MODE

This is the most visually exciting new variation, thanks to its Donkey Kong backdrop and gridiron markings. Two players drop blocks from opposite ends of the same playfield, in an attempt to push the whole bricky mass over somebody's 'game over' line. But it has a pretty stupid flaw – if you leave space for an I-block, the player who covers the gap is, in effect, creating a solid base which his opponent will use to defeat him.

PUZZLE TETRIS

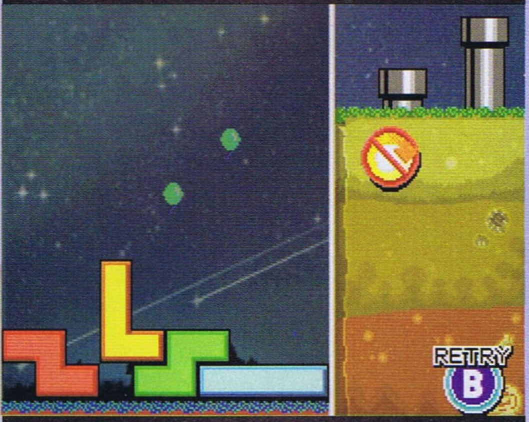
If the twitch-reaction gameplay of traditional Tetris *isn't your thing, there are some slightly more sedate variations to try your luck at.*



■ You can spend as long as you like staring at this screen…



■ But you'll have to complete it using these shapes. Bah.



■ Alternatively, there's the Touch Puzzle mode. Or not.

particular – really don't deserve to be featured on this cartridge. If it wasn't for the familiar *Tetris* shapes, they could each be mistaken for any number of long forgotten puzzle flops.

The good stuff, though, is amazing. It's a basic, beautiful version of the finest puzzle game ever devised, and it's geared towards multiplayer competition. Ten players in the short-range wireless link-up mode, and two or four on Wi-Fi. If you've got DS-owning, puzzle-loving friends, or (better yet) wireless internet access, you're going to get more than your £30 worth out of *Tetris DS*.

The game takes on an entirely new dimension in multiplayer – a dimension many players won't have experienced, given previous versions' demands for multiple cartridges and willing opponents. Here, you can share one copy of the game among as many DS owners as you're ever likely to gather in a single room, and you're only ever a Wi-Fi hotspot away from a clash with ranked opposition on the internet.

If you ever thought you were good at *Tetris*, Wi-Fi mode is the place to test your skills and have your ego boosted or shattered accordingly. From powering on the DS, you can be in the middle of a competitive two-player game in under a minute. Well-matched opponents



YOUR WAY

You can only change two variables – the initially distracting ghost piece, which shows exactly where you're going to drop but looks too much like your 'live' piece, and the hard drop feature. If you don't master the latter, you will never, ever win a Wi-Fi game. It warps your piece straight to the bottom.

NEW AND IMPROVED?

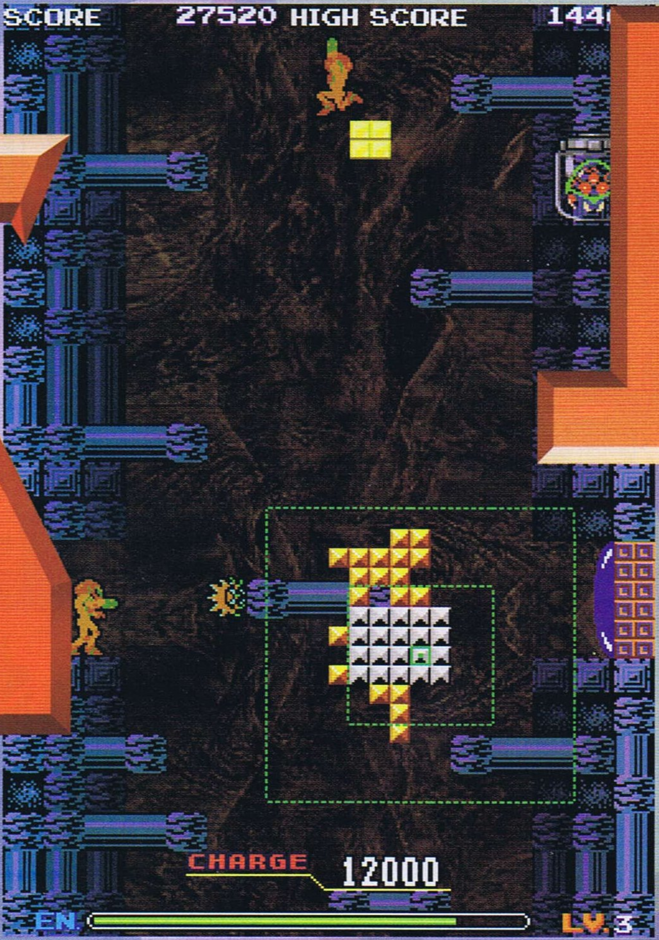
Because it would be indecent to release a naked Tetris game…

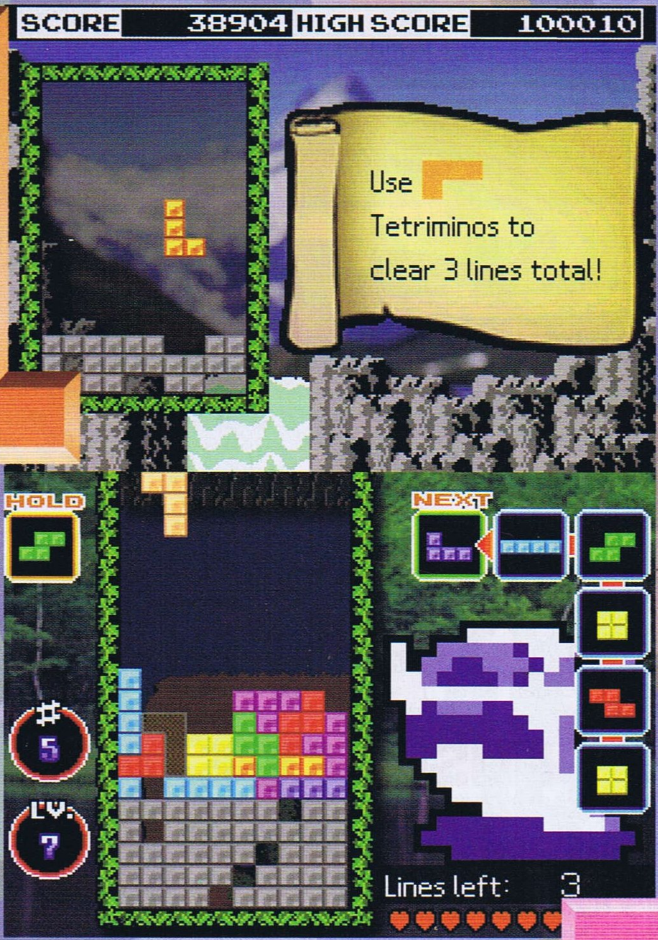
CATCH MODE

Bearing only a passing similarity to real *Tetris*, this mode involves rotating the mass of bricks in order to catch the sticky blocks that fall from the upper screen. When you've collected enough of them, the 'core' starts to glow and will eventually explode, taking with it any nearby blocks and floating Metroids. Uncalled for, really.

MISSION MODE

Normally you won't have time to look at the top screen. In this mode, you have to, because the only way to score points is to follow the instructions up there. You play against the computer or via local wireless link-up, competing to complete objectives such as 'clear some lines using a selection of really awkward blocks'. Quite good.





tend to stick around long enough for at least a best-of-five series, and the scoring is set up so there's no purpose in repeatedly playing somebody you can beat easily. You'll earn more ranking points for beating a good player once than thrashing a bad player ten times. If the computer matches you with someone inappropriate, you won't have to wait long to find a more suitable rival.

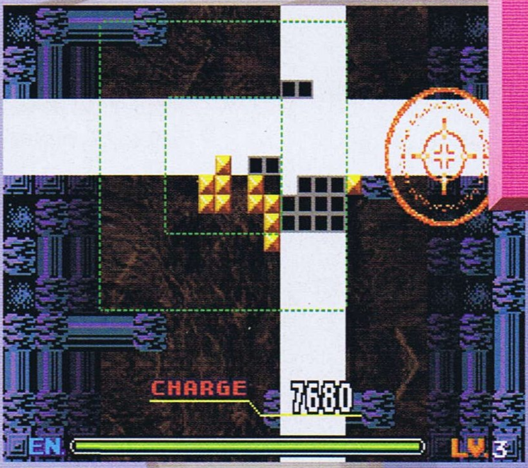
Four-player internet games aren't quite so good, because you'll have to contend with one of Nintendo's 'improvements' – Mario-style powerup items. With no option to play proper Wi-Fi *Tetris* against more than one person, it's a frenzy of bananas, red shells, thunderbolts and the like. In the heat of a battle you'll rarely be able to tell which player your items are being directed at, and losing because some random person hit you with a random item, well… it's hardly in keeping with the all-skill spirit of *Tetris*.

Despite all the attention-grabbing extras in here, we think Nintendo has missed a trick in omitting some of the successful modes from its last versions – particularly *Tetris DX*, the Game Boy Color edition which remains the most complete 'real' *Tetris*. Why no Ultra or Sprint modes, Nintendo? Why can't family members who share a cartridge log in under more



MIX IT UP

Your rewards for good performances in the solo modes are extra songs for your sound-test list (thanks, Nintendo, you're really spoiling us). Given the wonderful 8-bit Nintendo graphics scattered throughout the game, we hoped for some Smash Bros-style trophies or similar. Denied.



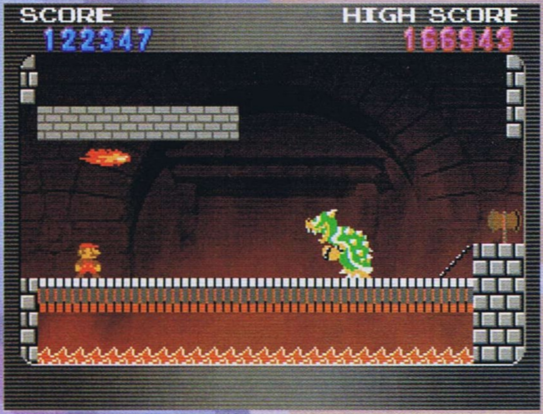
△ **BOOM! goes the core. YAWN! go we.**

WAIT! THERE'S MORE...

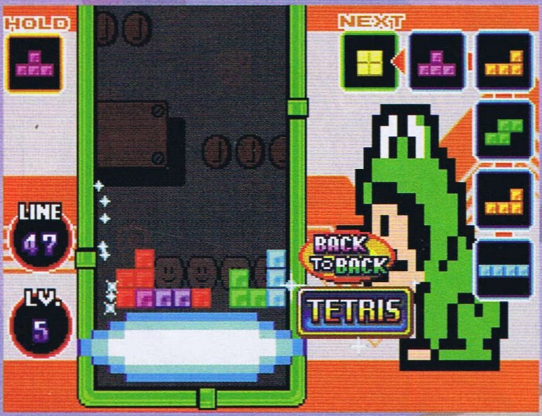
It's probably the most 'packed' Tetris we've ever seen.



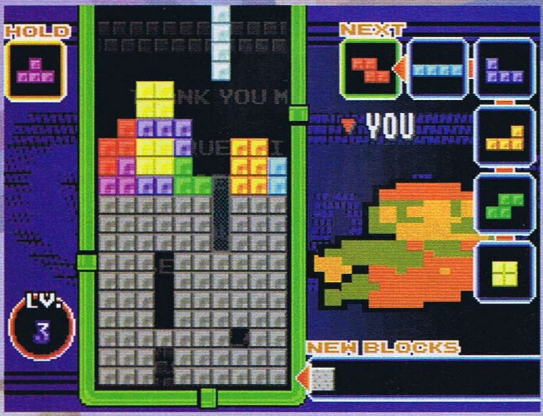
Work your way to the bottom from a seemingly impossible situation, while Balloon Kid plays in the upper screen.



Significant moments in the solo Marathon mode are accompanied by boss battles. This makes us happy.



Back to back Tetris! It's nice that the game records this, but you can do 20 in a row and still get the same message.



Just as you're approaching defeat, you get the opportunity to turn things around. The best feeling in the world.



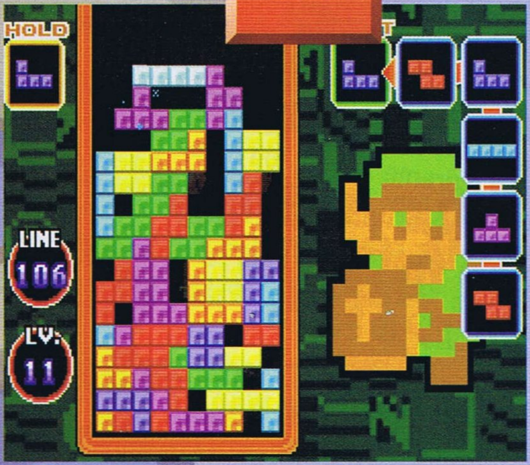
than one ID? Why doesn't the game save more of your stats? Where is the high score table?

Those are the kinds of criticisms we've levelled at past non-Nintendo versions of the game. It's disappointing to have to list them again here, given that *Tetris DS* represented a golden opportunity for Nintendo to reclaim ownership of the title that launched the Game Boy. We'll have to wait a while longer for the definitive uber-*Tetris*.

"WE'LL HAVE TO WAIT A WHILE LONGER FOR THE DEFINITIVE UBER-TETRIS"

For now, though, the brilliance of the two-player online mode and the pleasingly generous ten players, one cartridge link-up make up for at least some of those omissions. And given that the all-consuming nature of Wi-Fi matches has meant this review was the very last part of the magazine to be written, it would be churlish to deny *Tetris DS* Star Game status. Besides, we need fresh opponents.

MARTIN KITTS



△ After level 10, the speed starts to get a bit overwhelming.

+

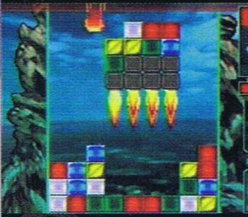
- Nintendo-ised.
- Seamless Wi-Fi.
- Ten-player link-up.
- Very nicely tuned.

–

- Some really weak new modes.
- Limited Wi-Fi options.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Meteos
Bandai
NGC/108 89%
Stormingly different puzzler that's the best alternative on DS. Not online, though.



7 VISUALS

Tetris has never looked better (which isn't saying much, but...)

6 SOUNDS

You always get the same tunes, which is a bit poor, really.

8 MASTERY

Wi-Fi works so well. Shame there aren't more modes for it.

10 LIFESPAN

Online matches against worthy opponents, any time you like.

VERDICT

If you're one of the many who rarely got to play multiplayer *Tetris*, you'll love this. It's a thing of beauty.

NGC 90


NO UNWANTED SUBSCRIPTIONS : CHOOSE 1 GET 1
TUNES CHART TRUE POLY
Pump It 107102 101559
Sorry 107103 101560
Put Your Records On 107104 101561
Red Dress 107159 101583
Touch The Sky 107160 101584
Its Chico Time 107113 101570
Beep 107114 101571
No Tomorrow 107115 101572
Sewn 107116 101573
Thunder In My Heart again 108928 101547
You Got The Love 108929 101548
TALKING TONES REAL
Basil Fawlty 108396
Daffyd - Little Britain 108406
Dastardly And Mutley 108407
Kenneth Williams 108424
Mel B - Bo Selecta 108434
Ozzy 108448
Sponge Bob 108459
You Muppet 108474
Asian Taxi 107168
The A team intro 107169
Banana Man 107170
Dirty Dwarves 107173
Southpark - Suck On My Balls 107176
Worms Incoming 107177
REAL SOUNDS REAL
The GREATEST Female ORGASM EVER!! 108031
Pulp Fiction - Path Of The Righteous Man 108051
Donald Duck Getting A BJ (Hilarious) 108056
Car Alarm 108094
Car Wheelspins 108096
Dukes Of Hazzard - General Lee 108135
Full Metal Jacket - "Do You Suck…?" 108138
Catchphrase Buzzer 107175
Robo Cop - 20 Seconds To Comply 108014
Austin Powers - Alota Fagina 108044
Monkey Going Nuts 108080
Police - 'Come Out With Your Hands Up' 108118
Back To The Future - Serious S*** 108045
Thunder Effects 108128
M16 Rifle 108114
Darth Vader 107300
Bullseye 107299
WARNING TONES REAL
Asshole Alert 107178
Bullshitter Alert 107181
Bunny Boiler Alert 107182
Dickhead Alert 107184
Fatboy Alert 107186
Ginger Alert 107187
Knob Jockey Alert 107190
Minger Alert 107191
Slapper Alert 107193
WALLPAPERS
Playboy 109635
WIFE BEATER Really alcoholic 109977
FANCY A QUICKIE? 104667
truffle shuffle 104672
109072
NICE GIRLS SWALLOW 109496
109996
109389
PLEASE GOD, DON'T LET IT GO TO PENALTIES 104785
YOUR MUM -ME 109883
104711
106625
104731
SWEARING IS BIG AND F***IN CLEVER 104678
my other ride is... your mum 104676
GIVE HEAD! 106444
109626
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TXT THE 6 DIGIT ITEM CODE TO
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ORDER FROM IRELAND
TXT IRE (space) CODE to 57856
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LUNATIC VIDS
104806 You Pierced What
104128 Look closely, scary
104801 Drugged up Footballer
104339 Watch Out
104680 Crazy Tractor Boy Racer
104802 Firecracker Action
104092 Evo Vs Elise - Who Wins?
104803 Super Knockout
109833 Treadmill breaker
109619 2 Skylines ¼ Mile
104333 Ninja vs Chav
104809 Whole Lotta Love
104805 Love Hurts
104341 Face full of a**
104374 Crazy Cop Chase
AWESOME CARNAGE CLIP VIDS
crazy multi clips 104789 Cycling Lunacy
crazy multi clips 104790 Crash, Bang, Whallop
crazy multi clips 104791 Comedy Clips
crazy multi clips 104792 Pain Junkies
crazy multi clips 104793 Blatant Stupidity
GAMES
104598 Carmageddon ABCEFG
104597 Cannon Fodder ABCDEG
106804 Public Sex Kama. ABDEFG
104679 24 - The Game ABCDEFGHI
104636 Stargate SG1 ABD
104624 Real Superbike ABDEFG
106497 Wet T Shirt Contest AG
104644 Slot Cars ABCEFG
106816 Limit Texas Hold 'em ABDFG
104643 Kama. Sexplosion ABCDEFG
106818 Pool Challenge A
104642 World Soccer Man. ABCDEFGI
106506 Cricket ABDE
104626 Rocky Boxing ABD
104639 Total Overdose ABCDEFGH
COMPATIBILITY A: NOKIA • B: MOTOROLA • C: SAGEM • D: SAMSUNG
E: SHARP • F: SIEMENS • G: SONY ERICSSON • H: LG • I: PANASONIC
ANIMATIONS
104788 Boob Jiggler
106009 Jordan Fun
109532 Nicker Dropper
106223 Boob Bouncer
106527 Football Flasher
GIRLS IN UNIFORM
104520 Blonde Nurse
104515 French Tickler
104512 Good Cop Bad Cop
104509 Hot Secretary
104543 Army Chick
104825 Naughty Babe
HOT GIRL VIDS
104533 Foxy Teaser
104428 Seductive Blonde
104415 Pammy Fun
106001 Blonde Dancer
106002 Crystal Tease
104417 Pert Paris
104540 Andrea Tease
104412 Naughty Abi
106104 Pink PVC
104419 Blonde Strip
106078 Red Hot Blonde
106105 Juicy Brunette
109815 Naughty Anna
104429 Foxy Blonde
109586 Sexy Teaser
104536 Saucy Brunette
104418 Paris Night Show
104814 Hot Babe Tease
104416 Pammy's Dip
104414 Jordan fun
104539 Awesome Brunette
104413 Abi Girl Fun
109477 Massive.....
106053 Hot & Waiting
109817 Poolside Frolics
SWEDISH BLONDE VIDS
104404 Ingrid
104411 Helga
104819 Anika
104406 Ursula
109565 Kasha
109591 Anya
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extreme sports, top tunes
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Customers must be over 16 years of age. Single items: Pictures, Videos, Animations & Tones cost £4.50 (Ireland $6). Games cost £6.00 (Ireland $8). Charge messages sent in denominations of £1.50. You will be sent a WAP link to collect your item and a small additional network charge may be incurred. Pre-pay users without enough credit will not receive items. Responsibility cannot be accepted for content ordered that is not supported by the handset or for delayed or distorted content delivery. Due to phone screen sizes/resolutions images downloaded may differ slightly from shown. TUNES: MCPS & PRS payments paid. TRUETONES: are not original recordings and are not sung by original artists and are not connected with the artist or associated companies in any way. GAMES: For more detailed game compatibility info, please visit the DBMob wapsite. WAPSITE: A small network charge maybe incurred from your provider during connection. Prices correct at time of going to print. We reserve the right to alter pricing at any time. K2 Media may contact you by SMS with the latest promotions and other products offered by K2 Media or its associated companies. DBMob is a product of K2 Media Ltd, PO Box 162, Kendal, LA8 8WW. Support line available between 9am to 5pm, Mon to Fri - +44 (0) 871 200 3193.

WELCOME TO THE REVOLUTION...



THE Nintendo® BOOK OF RECORDS 2006

The tallest, the fastest, the scariest, the ugliest, the most ears, the… you get the idea. These are the Nintendo world's greatest, with measurements guaranteed by officials to be "woefully inaccurate".

▽ **Axle The Red, with a twig for an arm and a rose for a head.**



THE BODY

MOST DURABLE HUMAN

In March 2004, FOXHOUND Field Commander **Liquid Snake** got a ringside seat for an uncomfortably warm helicopter explosion, emerged bare-chested but unharmed from a direct rocket attack on a Metal Gear REX he was driving, and survived a fall of 100 feet onto a hard metal floor following several punches to the face. He does look drawn, though.

MOST TEETH

Raccoon City, North America was put on the map by local hero **William Birkin**, who in January 2003 evolved into 'G4' form and boasted 37 incisors growing out of his head.

LARGEST TUMMY BUTTON

'X' marks the spot! Careful diet (and regularly putting his thumb in his mouth and blowing) has enabled celluloid villain **Captain Blue** to cultivate a belly button 7.7cm in depth – or, big enough to swallow his foot if it were an 'inny'. Captain Blue hoards evil in his tummy button to keep him bad right through winter.



Closing the gap…
Captain Blue (10.3cm, 10% of body depth)
Doshin the Giant (28cm, 8% of body depth)
Petey Piranha (17cm, 5% of body depth)

LEAST TEETH

Mushroom Kingdom scientist **Professor Gadd** holds just one large tooth in his mouth after an accident with a hoover nozzle. He also has icing for hair. Tasty.

LONGEST LIMBS

At 10.73 metres long, **Axle The Red** of the Mega Man universe has an arm that often gets trapped in lift doors – hence the spare he carries wrapped around his leg. Or what's at least *hoped* to be a spare arm. Mr The Red is found most weekends basking in a greenhouse and vigorously rubbing himself with horse manure.

LONGEST TONGUE

The tongue of **King Boo** of Sirena Beach – 130.2cm at full stretch – enables him to deal with all his Christmas card envelopes in one go, and provide a uniquely unpleasant solution to the problem of how to 'shake hands'.

SHORTEST TONGUE

Malboro of Mushroom Forest has at least 30 teeth, but a tongue just 2% of his mouth size. Malboro is, for obvious reasons, not a fan of Cadbury's Creme Eggs.



LONGEST FACIAL HAIR

Bitores Mendez' luxurious 37.2cm-long beard has provided a home to many small animals and cake crumbs since the beginning of his record attempt. Mr Mendez' ultimate aim: a beard long enough to wear as a scarf for days when even being enveloped by exploding gasoline can't quite keep you snug enough.



Bitores Mendez · Dr Eggman · Jimmy

Closing the gap...
Bitores Mendez (beard, 37.2cm)
Dr Eggman (moustache, 29.9cm)
Jimmy (moustache, 21.2cm)

NATURE

CLEVEREST BEAR

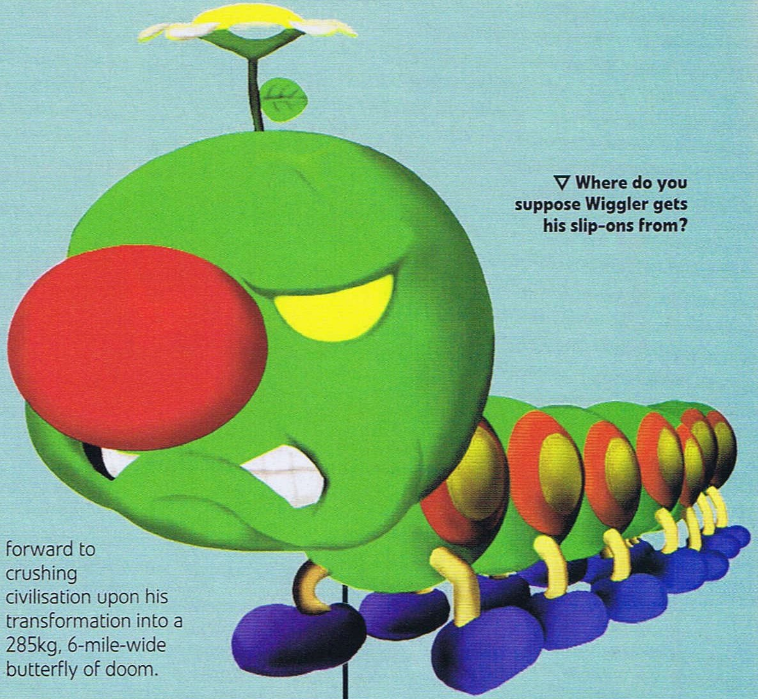
Under test conditions in October 2002, **Bear**, a member of the *TimeSplitters 2* troupe, demonstrated an IQ of 154 – in other words, clever enough to wield a 12-bore shotgun, wear a fez, and use the shotgun on anyone who questions the fez. 'Bear' also reacts to his own name – with a smattering of bullets right in the face of whoever asked.

MOST OBESE PIG

Outset Island in the former district of Hyrule experiences regular seismic activity due to **Pig** scratching his ear. Fed exclusively on deku nuts, seagulls and children, he weighs 183kg and has a circumference of 1.3 metres. The Outset Islanders plan to cook the rotund swine as soon as a local Goron trader has completed work on The Great Saucepan.

LONGEST ENEMY

Wiggler of Gelato Beach killed two Nintendo Records officials and tore up seven tape measures during attempts to confirm his length as 57.5 metres. He enjoys having his back scratched, and looks forward to crushing civilisation upon his transformation into a 285kg, 6-mile-wide butterfly of doom.



▽ Where do you suppose Wiggler gets his slip-ons from?

SHORTEST ENEMY

The Free Rangers, a crack team of militant fighters regularly scrambled at the Sandersons' home in *Chibi-Robo!*, stood at just 14cm tall as of February 2005. In their words, they "refuse to be beat".



△ They're related to Mr Potato head.



△ Birkin. Teeth (facing page, left)



Mr Moon

BIGGEST EYE

At 3.75 metres in diameter, the eye of Termina's **The Moon** is not only the biggest of its type – it's also the brightest, bathing the land in a red light that most citizens agree is "even more sinister than Tingle." In January of 2004, Mr Moon complained of having something in his eye: it was an eagle.

Closing the gap...
Sauron (3.66 metres)
Hooktail (1.22 metres)
King Kong (1.12 metres)



Sauron · Hooktail · King Kong

NINTENDO BOOK OF RECORDS

"Setting their bottoms on fire"



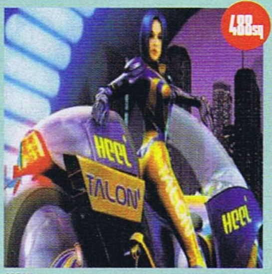
Taki

TIGHTEST OUTFIT

The red PVC catsuit sported by **Taki** in August 2003's *SoulCalibur II* tournament clocks in at 783 times the pressure exerted by an average-sized guinea pig in a matchbox. Taki needs to be unpeeled like a Babybel cheese to go to the toilet.

Closing the gap...

XGIII designated costume (488 squeezobels)
Elise (227 squeezobels)
F1 2002 (155 squeezobels)



XGIII



Elise



F1 2002.



▽ **Samus Aran learnt her powerdressing from Thatcher in the 1980s.**

ENTERTAINMENT & STYLE

LEAST SUBTLE CAMEO

During July 2003's *F-Zero GX* magnocraft championship, **ROB The Robot** stretched the idea of "a small distinctive part" to its limits by towering 273 feet over the Port Down course. Nintendo Records officials confirmed that this cameo could only have been grander if Mr Robot had scratched "LOOK AT ME!" on his face and performed a special robot dance.

LARGEST SHOULDERPADS

The unrivalled record holder for a number of years now, **Samus Aran**'s shoulders continue to out-pad even those bounty hunters with entire footballs stuffed under their t-shirts. Approximately 723 miles in diameter, Ms Aran's shoulders have a molten core, a breathable atmosphere, and will be landed on by a manned NASA mission in 2027.

DEADLIEST CLOTHING

The specialties of the **Yukes** tribe of *Crystal Chronicles* include magic power, spellcasting range, and incredibly pointy bras (42.7cm). Female Yukes have been known to be stranded helpless in fields for days at a time after tripping over. Also, in Yukes culture, the placing of two traffic cones over the chest to simulate a lady's chest is particularly clever.

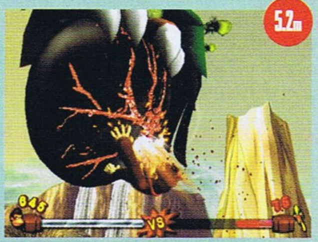
GEOGRAPHY

MOST ADAPTABLE CREATURE

In September 2001, scientists working in the Arctic Cove area, near the annual *Wave Race: Blue Storm* tournament, discovered a *colony of penguins* – an animal thought for centuries to be found only at the *south* pole. Reportedly "lovely and snug" when found, the **Arctic Penguin** is now a protected species. This allows them to cheekily goad hungry polar bears from the safety of their cave.

LARGEST EGG

In September 2004, **Scruff Roc**'s 5.2 metre-egg made ostriches feel very silly indeed. Often punched into smithereens by gorillas having a bad day, the Roc's egg has evolved to be constructed of an almost entirely impenetrable metal shell – the baby Roc takes at least 34 years to gently tap its way out.





Scruff Roc's egg



Big Yoshi's egg



Billy Hatcher's egg

Closing the gap...

Scruff Roc's egg (5.2 metres)
Big Yoshi's Egg (4.3 metres)
Billy Hatcher's (1.3 metres)



▽ **Falco Lombardi is remarkably dextrous for a feather-fingered falcon.**

LARGEST HANDHELD WEAPON

As modelled by Star Fox team member **Falco Lombardi**, the *Starfox Assault* 'portable' Homing Launcher is 1.88m in length and weighs 92kg – providing a recoil kick that can actually send the smaller user back in time. Shortly after this picture, Mr Lombardi's entire right side disintegrated.



Homing Launcher | *Soul Edge* | *Battalion Wars*

Closing the gap…

Homing Launcher (92kg)
Soul Edge (88kg)
Battalion Wars (77kg)

MOST CASTLES

King Bowser, of the Mushroom Kingdom, owns at least 27 castles in various territories, most open to visitors prepared for first-degree burns and hundred-ton weights falling on them. Bowser has accrued his castles via often controversial means, regularly evading debt collectors by sailing off in a hot air balloon or setting their bottoms on fire.

SCIENCE

SLOWEST BULLET

Bullet Bill became the world's least useful bullet in November 2001 at the *Super Smash Bros Melee* Princess Peach arena, travelling at a recorded speed of 0.9 metres per second – roughly equivalent to the closing speed of Premier Plastics' Rapid Bi-Fold Garage Doors. Bill is presently in training for a sub-0.5mph attempt, for which he'll be thrown across the room from a parrot's beak.

FURTHEST WINGLESS FLIGHT

During November 2003's **Mario Kart Double Dash** Tournament, several competitors were hurled 473 metres (517 yards) at 175kph by a gigantic great barrel placed on the DK Mountain course – and were high enough to see the stomachs they'd left back on the ground. Commenting on the extremes of G-force involved, one of the competitors commented, "Wah-wah-wah-waaaaaaaaaaaah. Wah-wah-waaaah. Wah."



△ **Fly, my pretties, fly.**

SPORT

SHORTEST RACETRACK

Even at seven laps, the **Baby Park** track (820 metres long) has caused near-riots at several *Mario Kart: Double Dash* championships as disgruntled spectators attempt to claim their money after paying for a 47-second long race. Organisers argue that, from a baby's perspective, it's gotta be the biggest, bestest twack ever, EVER!



△ **The ludicrously teeny Baby Park.**

MOST ADVANCED HORSE & CART

In 12th century **Persia**, a horse-and-cart was devised that was able to leap off a ramp in a manner similar to "stunt cars" of the 20th century – despite a literal horsepower of two. Scientists and historians agree that this can only have been achieved by either a) an incredibly advanced system of wooden gears, b) exceptionally aerodynamic design, or c) magical flying horses. The fact that the cart could also travel back in time is, in fact, easier to explain.

SHARPEST SHOOTER

Kurdish sniper specialist **Sniper Wolf** claims to be able to train her sights on a single spot for up to seven days without food. This makes her almost patient enough to wait for *Twilight Princess*.

LEAST SHARP SHOOTER

During the WWII attack on Pearl Harbour (**Medal of Honour: Rising Sun** re-enactment), AI troops proved entirely unable to shoot accurately under any circumstances. In test conditions, a six-metre wide gun barrel, twisted to be inserted directly into someone's stomach, gave them a target accuracy of 34%.

FASTEST BUS

During a Face Off in a *Burnout* tournament, **Bus** achieved top speeds in excess of 149mph. The rear-view mirror sight of a ton of metal crashing through traffic, combined with the sinister hiss of the bus's hydraulics, also made it the *World's Most Unnerving Chase* until Reginald Files-Aimes and Shigeru Miyamoto played a drunken game of kiss chase at a Nintendo Christmas party.



△ **Medal of Honour: oh dear…**



◁ **Sniper Wolf could also have been a contender in the outfit category.**

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE



What did you play? Here's our guide to the changes made to games *after* their release.

Did you know that there are in fact six different versions of the sublime *Metroid Prime* on shelves around the world? Or that Capcom made major alterations to *Resident Evil 4* after it was originally released?

It's not uncommon that even after slaving away for years on their gaming masterpieces, Nintendo makes late changes, long after the product is on the shelves.

But why would anyone bother when they could just as easily be enjoying the spoils of their hard work? From an endless, Lucas-style quest for perfection, to the legal implications of offending German sensibilities with graphic scenes of Goomba-killing, a variety of factors dictate whether a developer is going to spend the time and effort to edit a finished game.

All differences mentioned are in comparison to the UK versions, and while games like *Wind Waker* and *Mario Sunshine* have also undergone tweaking, we kind of ran out of steam after playing through the entire output of those retcon specialists at Retro. Enjoy!



METROID PRIME

Over 50 alterations were made to *Metroid Prime* after its original US launch in 2002. While no official reason has been given by Retro or Nintendo for these changes, **NGC** has it on very good authority that they were joint decisions by both Retro and Nintendo, in a bid to correct crashes and a large number of gameplay altering glitches that many hardcore *Metroid Prime* fans were constantly abusing. The most notable changes include:

The Geo Thermal Core – home to the game's most significant alterations. The original American release allows you to skip the Spiderball and Grapple Beam easily and has no Bendezium blocking the door to the Plasma Beam. The USA Player's Choice release had an unbreakable lock added that could only be removed once the Grapple Beam was collected.



△ **Pay less for the game on Player's Choice and you won't be able to enjoy certain sequence breaks.**

The Japanese version also has the stalagmite near the door removed (as this was as a stepping stone to reach the spinners without the Grapple Beam).



△ **Buy the first release of a game and you may be acting as an unofficial playtester. Spoilsports.**



△ **Samus is surprised to discover her reworked animation in the US versions of *Prime*.**

The room holding the Grapple Beam also felt the pinch, as the Bendezium blocking access to it isn't there in the USA versions. Also, the Grapple Beam animation is significantly different in the original and Player's Choice USA releases.

Magmoor Caverns and Phendrana drifts are known as 'Lava Caves' and 'Ice Valley' respectively in the Japanese version, and the male narrator introduces each new world.



△ **The Japanese names don't feature the terrible puns and alien-sounding words of the English versions.**

There's a Hunter Metroid present in the 'Frost Cave' room in the American and Japanese versions.



△ What? Where did he come from?





△ Not as rare as the North Korean version, in which Samus staves off hunger by eating her shoes.

The incredibly rare Korean version has its own special 'feature'. If you happen to have an American *Metroid Prime* save file on the memory card, it will 'speed read' the data on it and will permanently corrupt the file, leading to many crazy and ridiculous things happening in the game. These things include adding new enemies to rooms (such as an Elite Pirate in Phendrana!), removing enemies from rooms (such as Thardus), removing major items (such as the Grapple Beam, Thermal Visor and Spiderball) and removing vital scan points, preventing you from ever finishing the game!



METROID PRIME 2: (DARK) ECHOES

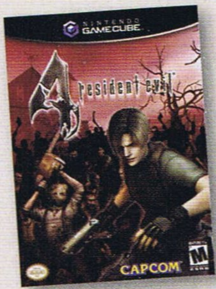
There are two known differences between the American and European versions of *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes*, the first one being that the Ghetto Jump for Early Seekers was removed. The second is that an Ing Cache was removed from venomous pond, designed to prevent you from reaching Chykka without the Grapple Beam. The American and Australian versions of *Metroid Prime 2* also came with a reflective cover, which wasn't used in Europe.

The Japanese version, however, has had the most alterations to it (which includes the two mentioned above), the most significant being the name change. Known as *Metroid Prime 2: Dark Echoes* in Japan, it has had a large number of the tricks and glitches removed (eg the Jump Guardian trick, as seen in **NGC** issues 103/104) in an effort to force players through the game's intended route. Retro also made the jingle played when collecting a key in the Dark World sound more sinister.





△ One simple method to see if you're playing the Jap version.

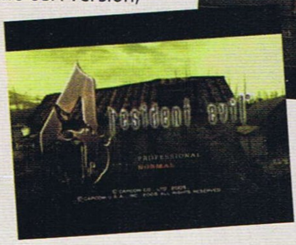


RESIDENT EVIL 4

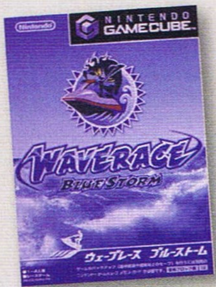
After the American release of *Resident Evil 4*, Capcom set about making a number of alterations to it for the European market. Such changes include correcting the lack of an Easy mode in the American version and the decrease in money pickups (both size and frequency) which made it slower to upgrade weapons. Ammo pickups remain higher in the USA version, though. Also, more than one First Aid spray can be carried at once, but they cost double the price at 10,000 ptas. And if you dump the El Gigante into the molten magma, exit and return to the room, the 15,000 ptas reward will still be left behind for you to collect.

Then there's also the German version of *Resident Evil 4*, which has some major elements of the game removed in a bid to comply with Germany's 'Youth Protection Law'. Both Assignment Ada and the fantastic Mercenaries minigames cannot be accessed, meaning that the Chicago Typewriter and the Handcannon are also unavailable to use in the game.





△ The price of first aid these days… Another sign of Rip-Off Britain.



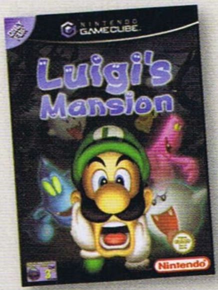
WAVE RACE BLUE STORM

Nintendo changed some of the course names used in the Japanese version of the game. Lost Temple Lagoon was originally Ethnic Lagoon, Ocean City Harbour was known as City Harbour, Arctic Bay was Cool Ocean and La Razza Canal was known as Aqua Maze.





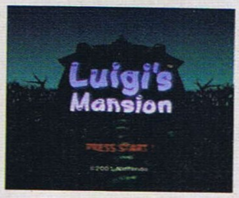
△ Political correctness gone mad! You couldn't make it up…



LUIGI'S MANSION

After the release of *Luigi's Mansion* in Japan and the USA, Shigeru Miyamoto publicly addressed the criticisms levelled at the game's – lack of – challenge and said that they would make changes to it for the European and Australian release. The biggest alterations seem to be to the Hidden Mansion that is unlocked after you finish the game. The Hidden Mansion in the European and Australian versions is in fact a mirrored version of the mansion, unlike in the Japanese and USA version of the game.

The Hidden Mansion in the European and Australian releases was made tougher with harder bosses, less hearts, a darker mansion and a lot more ghosts to be fought.



▷ Yes, it's Luigi's marvellous title screen.

NGC TELLS YOU
HOW TO...

NGC GUARANTEE 100% COMPLETION

Live life to the full in...

ANIMAL CROSSING: WILD WORLD



EVENTS GUIDE

Here's a list of all the regular events that take place in *Animal Crossing: Wild World*, in a month-by-month lowdown, showing exactly when they take place. Always remember to check the bulletin board for special events too, so you don't miss out.

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

It's Animal Crossing – but on the DS. The Gamecube favourite comes to the DS in familiar, but improved, form, and the best news is that you can play it online, meaning friends can visit your town and you can all play simultaneously. Fabulous.

Otherwise, Animal Crossing is all about living a virtual life and fitting into a community of loveable beast-headed freaks. The aim, if there really is one, is to improve your house and its furnishings, but there's a hundred and one other things to do and it all takes place at a relaxing pace. Lovely stuff.



△ It's a man-sized owl! Run, boy, RUN!



△ Just talk to her, boy. Sixth formers, eh?



△ Does anyone else find this pic terrifying?

JANUARY

NEW YEAR'S DAY

(1st Jan, midnight to midnight)
Speak to the mayor on New Year's Day and you'll get a fortune from him (as in the looking-into-the-future kind, not the money kind).

LA-DI-DAY

(Second Saturday in January, 6am to 6pm)
Hire a villager to sing you a song that you like; the villagers will then sing this song throughout the day.

FISHING TOURNAMENT

(Third Sunday, 12pm to 6pm)
Take your fish to the mayor. If yours is the biggest, you'll get the Fish Trophy – if you manage to beat your personal record, you'll get more lovely furniture to decorate your hovel with as a reward.

YAY DAY

(Fourth Sunday, 6am to 6am)
You'll need to wander around saying nice things about the villagers, by way of the virtual keyboard.

FEBRUARY

FLEA MARKET

(First Saturday, 6am to 6am)
Simply visit the other villagers' homes for a chance to buy their items. They'll visit you if you're in, to buy stuff from you.

BRIGHT NIGHTS

(Second week, 6am Monday to Saturday)
Vote for the best-decorated villager's



WHAT WE SAID

It's better suited to the DS, with plenty of little tweaks and improvements. However, it's not *that* different to the Gamecube version. Despite its familiarity, though, it still retains the ability to charm your socks off.

NGC 92



HOME SWEET HOME

Not only can your house be decorated and furnished nicely, you can also expand it and make it more palatial. But it's not cheap. Once you've paid off your initial mortgage to Tom Nook, you can start accruing enough Bells to add extensions to your house.

Here's how much you need for each expansion:

- 1st Expansion: 120,000 Bells
- 2nd Expansion: 298,000 Bells
- 3rd Expansion: 598,000 Bells
- 4th Expansion: 728,000 Bells
- 5th Expansion: 848,000 Bells
- 6th Expansion: 948,000 Bells



ANIMAL CROSSING: WILD WORLD

How much is that puppy in the window's three-piece suite?

THE HAPPY ROOM ACADEMY

The Happy Room Academy, of course, rates your house on how well you've decorated it. It's not just a case of making it look pretty, however. There are certain rules to follow, and the following tips and tricks will help you get the most points out of the HRA:

There are **two types of furniture** in the game – you can get a furniture series, and themed furniture. Don't mix and match them as you'll get lots of points deducted by the HRA (the swines)! Obviously, the best way to keep this from happening is to keep your themed stuff and your specific furniture series in separate rooms (you'll need to expand your house first, of course). Easy.

Following on from this, **always match designs** if you can (such as wallpaper and carpets) and make sure items are placed the right way round.

Also, make sure your floor **isn't strewn with rubbish**. Nobody likes a messy house, least of all the HRA.





△ "I find it odd that more dogs don't wear hats. What's not to love?"



△ Beware the scorpion! The fence is there for a reason.



△ The chances of anything coming from Mars are a million to one, she said.



△ The ladies *love* a canoe. They just can't resist it. Might explain why I'm single.



home by speaking to the mayor. No special visitors will arrive in this week, except for K K Slider.

FISHING TOURNAMENT

(Fourth Sunday, 12pm-6pm)

As before, take your fish to the mayor. If it's the biggest, you'll win the Fish Trophy, and if you beat your own record you'll receive an item of furniture.

MARCH

FLEA MARKET

(First Saturday, 6am-6am)

Visit other villagers' houses for a further chance to buy whatever guff they're selling. Again, they'll also visit you to buy your tat.

LA-DI-DAY

(Second Saturday, 6am-6am)

Pick another delightful tune from one of the villagers and you'll be treated to it all day long.

FISHING TOURNAMENT

(Third Sunday, 12pm-6pm)

Show the mayor your fish again for a chance to win the infamous Fish Trophy. Beat a personal best to get furniture.

YAY DAY

(Fourth Sunday, 6am to 6am)

Compliment the villagers again to make them happy. One-word adjectives work best – 'nice', for example, will probably work better than 'totally crappy'.

APRIL

FLEA MARKET

(First Saturday, 6am to 6am)

Buy more stuff from the other villagers' houses and so on. If you've got a good relationship with a particular villager, you'll get more from 'em if they want something of yours.

FLOWER FEST

(Second week, 6am to end of week)

If you've got any rare flowers, now's the time to plant them. The mayor judges them, and if you win, you get the Flower Trophy.



△ "My mother said I shouldn't talk to dirty old tortoises."



△ Ah, the innocent joy of hole digging. It's all fun until someone *breaks their neck.*



△ "Taxi! Get me out of this place!"



△ The sea has no memory, so dispose of bodies here.

FISHING TOURNAMENT
(Fourth Sunday, 12pm to 6pm)
Again, best fish wins the trophy, and beating your personal best gets you some furniture. The winner's name also gets plastered over the bulletin board the next day.

MAY

FLEA MARKET
(First Saturday, 6am to 6am)
Buy items from other villagers' houses, and they can buy from yours. Villagers will only visit your house once, though.

LA-DI-DAY
(Second Saturday, 6am to 6am)
Choose a favourite tune from the villager you like the most, and the rest of 'em will sing along all day long. You don't have to choose just one song, though. Why not mix it up a little?

FISHING TOURNAMENT
(Third Sunday, 12pm to 6pm)
As before, the biggest fish wins the trophy, and beating your personal record nets some furniture. If you don't have a fishing rod, the mayor will give you one, the old cutie.

YAY DAY
(Fourth Sunday, 6am to 6am)
Compliments ahoy once again. Don't they ever get tired of being yes-men?

JUNE

FLEA MARKET
(First Saturday, 6am to 6am)
Another chance to invite flea-bitten animal people into your house to buy your wares, or else go and purchase things from their own abodes. Villagers will buy a maximum of six items.

THE BUG OFF
(Third Sunday, 12pm to 6pm)
Been collecting bugs? Good. Go speak to the mayor – the biggest bug will win and get the Bug Trophy. If you beat your personal best, as in the Fishing Tournament, you'll get some furniture.

JULY

FLEA MARKET
(First Saturday, 6am to 6am)
Let's hope you don't actually get fleas from these events, eh? Ho ho ho. Well, yes, anyway, go and buy a variety of items from other people's houses and sell 'em from yours.

LA-DI-DAY
(Second Saturday, 6am to midnight)
Pick a tune, any tune. Audition all your various neighbours and then reject the worst ones in Simon Cowell style.

THE BUG OFF
(Third Sunday, 12pm to 6pm)
It's the season for insects all right. Show 'em to the mayor; biggest wins the trophy, and beating your personal best gets you more furnishings.

YAY DAY
(Fourth Sunday, 6am to midnight)
Say nice things about the other villagers, if you can actually bear to, after six months of living in the same old town, looking at the same old babbling, twittery, eyebrow-impaired, make-up wearing weirdos.

AUGUST

FIREWORKS SHOW
(Every Saturday, 7pm to midnight)
Go speak to the mayor – he'll give you a sparkler and all you have to do is watch the proceedings with a smile on your face. That's entertainment.

THE BUG OFF
(Third Sunday, 12pm to 6pm)
As before, get the trophy for biggest bug, or a piece of furniture for beating your own record. Perhaps someone should mention this method of interior design to the hoardes of people always queueing for IKEA?



CASHING IN

SHOP 'TIL YOU DROP

Did you know that the more money you spend at Tom Nook's, the bigger his shop will get? This also means, of course, that he'll have a wider range of items on sale. The levels of spending at which he will upgrade his store are as follows:

- 25,000 Bells
- 90,000 Bells
- 240,000 Bells

This final upgrade – where the store becomes something like a supermarket – will also need a real-life friend to visit your town and buy something. Nice.

Also, the more you spend at Nook's shop, the more of a discount you will receive. Tom Nook will award you a point for every 100 Bells you spend. Once you hit a massive 20,000 points you'll get a 20% discount (although smaller discounts will obviously have become available before then).







SAVING MONEY

Once you start raking in the cash, you'll need to open a bank account (at the Post Office) to store your money, as you can only hold so much on your person. You'll also be rewarded with gifts by reaching certain saving milestones. They are as follows:

- 1,000,000 Bells: Tissue Box
- 10,000,000 Bells: Piggy Bank
- 100,000,000 Bells: Picture of Pelly
- 500,000,000 Bells: Picture of Phyllis
- 999,999,999 Bells: Model of the Town Hall

MAKING MONEY

Of course, before you can start shopping seriously at Tom Nook's and open a bank account, you'll need to start making money.

There are things all over the place that can be sold to Tom Nook for Bells.

- **Gyroids** – fire hydrant-like robot things. These are buried and need to be dug up with a shovel.
- **Fish** – you'll need a rod to catch them with first, obviously.
- **Fruit** – just shake the trees.
- **Bugs** – these can be found all over town, on trees, flowers, on the ground, near lights and water and under rocks. You'll need a net.
- **Fossils** – these are buried underground, so you'll need to get shovelling to find 'em. You'll also have to get them appraised at the museum.
- **Turnips** – you can grow these yourself, but turnip trading is a tricky business. It's a little bit like the stock exchange, only with, er, turnips.

And if you visit a friend's town and grab some fruit there, Nook will pay a lot of money for it. Although, if you're clever, you can plant some and grow your own fruit tree to produce fruit that can't be found elsewhere else in your town.

Finally, you can hit rocks with your spade – as they'll sometimes give up cash – and occasionally, on the top screen of the DS, you'll see a balloon with a gift attached to it. You'll need the slingshot to knock it down.





△ "Police! A frickin' *bear's* in my house!"



SEPTEMBER

FLEA MARKET
(First Saturday, 6am to 6am)
Flog things or buy 'em, same as always. You never know what new items are going to turn up though…

LA-DI-DAY
(Second Saturday, 6am to midnight)
Take the toppest tune from the most tremendous villager. T'riffic.

THE BUG OFF
(Third Sunday, 12pm to 6pm)
Biggest bug wins the trophy, and more furniture for beating a personal best.

YAY DAY
(Fourth Sunday, 6am to midnight)
Say nice things to people. Again.

OCTOBER

FLEA MARKET
(First Saturday, 6am to 6am)
Buy, sell – you know the score.

ACORN FESTIVAL
(Second Week, 6am Monday to 6am Sunday)
Grab acorns each day from beneath the requisite trees. Give them to Cornimer and you'll get pieces of the Mush furniture set at intervals, up to a maximum of 230 acorns by the end of the week. If you give Cornimer more than one set of acorns in any given day, you'll also get a fortune.

FISHING TOURNAMENT
(Third Sunday, 12pm to 6pm)
Fine frenzied fishing.

NOVEMBER

FLEA MARKET
(First Saturday, 6am to 6am)
More buy, more sell. It's a cross between *Wall Street* and Beatrix Potter.

LA-DI-DAY
(Second Saturday, 6am to midnight)
More enforced jollity with music.

FISHING TOURNAMENT
(Third Sunday, 12pm to 6pm)
Turn that trout into a trophy.

YAY DAY
(Fourth Sunday, 6am to midnight)
More one-word adjectival compliments to your animal men neighbours.

DECEMBER

FLEA MARKET
(First Saturday, 6am to 6am)
Capitalism runs riot again.

FISHING TOURNAMENT
(Third Sunday, 6am to 6am)
Take freshwater finds to the mayor.

NEW YEAR'S EVE
(31st December, 6am to midnight)
Visit the mayor and get some party poppers to let off when the town hall clock counts down to midnight.

TIMEWARP

With Mark Green

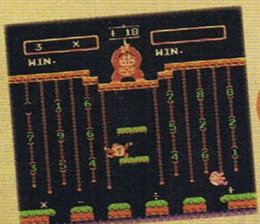


THE FAMILY TREE

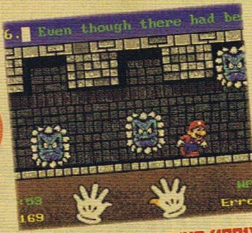
The sordid history of today's biggest games

You've been schooled

Mario and co's long history of training your brain – with just a single screen.



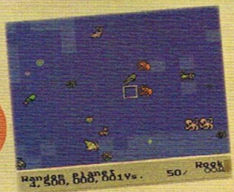
DONKEY KONG JR MATH (1983)
Or, the unlockable NES game in Gamecube *Animal Crossing* that you *really* didn't want.



MARIO TEACHES TYPING (1991)
Sugar-coating the process of becoming a slave to the keyboard for 'the man'. The box used different wording.



SUPER MARIO BROS & FRIENDS: WHEN I GROW UP (1991)
So many years on and there's only this screen-shot to go on. Hmm….



SIM EARTH (1992)
Tedious simulation of the entire planet from the *Sims* people.



MICKEY'S SAFARI IN LETTERLAND (1993)
Like a cruel version of *Countdown*. Oh those poor, poor children.



MARIO IS MISSING! (1993)
A hopelessly misjudged history lesson that very nearly killed Mario's career.





MARIO'S FUNDAMENTALS (1997)
The capitalised 'FUN' in this one's title puts us in mind of a clown turning up at a kid's birthday party with a sockpuppet called 'Mr Algebra' and a spinning bow tie with all the prime numbers printed on it. Sure enough, *Mario's FUNdamentals* and its collection of five games was dull as Dido's dishwater: the opportunity to burn your eyes on a PC monitor while playing yahtzee, othello, backgammon or dominoes.

Mario was your opponent in each game, and stared impassively out of the screen with a look that seemed to say, "You paid for this rubbish, kiddo." It's hard to imagine the childhood trauma caused by losing a game of cards to a man who can't even see over his own nose – the only saving grace was hearing Charles Martinet, voice of Mario since the year dot. That and realising that the reason Mario wears dungarees all the time is that if he wore a suit, he'd look as natural as an orangutan in a PG Tips advert.



MARIO'S EARLY YEARS! FUN WITH LETTERS (1993)
The game where Luigi is forced to sit in mud for the benefit of *your* child.



ELMO'S LETTER ADVENTURE (1999)
Terrifyingly-animated *Sesame Street* fare centred around Elmo. Eep.

Gaming Family Trees, A Definitive Guide 1019

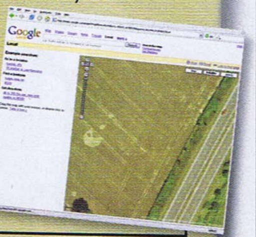
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RETRO NEWS

News rounded up from the world of retrogaming

CROPPING MAD

Google Maps doesn't just let you gaze down on Nintendo HQ car park and try to work out which car is Mario's. You can also see what crop circles are left by aliens who've visited from far, far away – namely, 1980. If you live near Reading, head south down the A33 and you should find this somewhere past Three Mile Cross. Although given that Google's satellite photos are years old, he's probably gobbled up the dots by now and consumed most of Caversham. Why is a ten-year-old photo in the 'Retro News' section, you say? (Runs.) **http://googlesightseeing.com/2006/03/09/pac-man**



GOING DUTCH

It might seem odd to talk about the 2006 municipal elections held on March 7th in The Netherlands, but we have our reasons. The Dutch labour party (Partij van de Arbeid) has created a gobsmacking little video based on vintage Mazza. Entitled *Super Mario Bos* – after party leader Wouter Bos – it uses Nintendo-based imagery to show how the party will a) create jobs, b) end pollution, and c) throw fireballs at Conservatives. We made that last one up, actually. **http://youtube.com/watch?v=sm1i_v_SvTo**



BEGINNING OF THE N

Surprise one: there's an entire online forum dedicated to Captain N: The Game Master – an '80s 'cartoon' (read: 'thinly-veiled advert') that starred a kid trapped in his NES, interacting with the likes of Simon Belmont, Mega Man and Link. Surprise two: DVD publisher Shout! Factory is interested in putting it all on disc. 'DVDInsider' claims he's "dealing with DiC" (stop giggling), and "knee-deep in stuff for bonus features". An official announcement's due in January – hopefully in cartoon Mega Man's stupid croaky voice **http://tinyurl.com/ff38f** or **ldloveszh.tripod.com/frames.html**



NET TENDO

TATTS AMAZING!

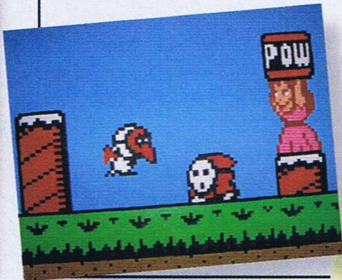


More 'Nintentatts', as we believe all the cool kids will be calling them five minutes from now. We've seen people dedicate their precious skin to all things Ninty. But permanently ink up their limbs for the love of *controller ports*? We bet he's sick of people asking him where he'd like them to stick the power lead. Us? We're just impressed he knew how to direct the tattoo artist to the bit of the body we only know as "that soft whatsit on the other side of your elbow". **gonintendo.com/?p=1110**



GAME ARTS

Every now and then we find a slap-yourself-across-the-cheek simple idea that we really wish we'd had. Paint a scene, if you will, from a Mario game – preferably entitled 'Little Mac delivering a wicked left uppercut to Glass Joe' or 'The River City Ransom kid knocking out some dude' – then watch the money-flood roll in and drown you in 'bling' 'til the end of your days. Still, we're not sure what the Nintendo Copyright Control Tower is making of all this as it peers across at Crackerbox's house using the Infringement Binoculars. Hang on a minute. Go back. Let's make that *silly* ideas we're glad we *never* had. **www.crackerbox.net/visual/nespaintings**



TOP 5 JAPLISH

The best ever mistranslations from Japanese into English…

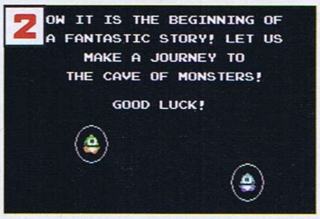
1



PRO WRESTLING (NES, 1986)

Loved the world over for happily proclaiming "A WINNER IS YOU!" on the victory screen. Use this whenever you win a multiplayer Gamecube game, and make your mates your ex-mates – fast!

2



BUBBLE BOBBLE (NES, 1987)

"Now it is the beginning of a fantastic story! Let us make a journey to the cave of monsters!" The irony: we've never actually seen the *end* of the fantastic story.

3



METROID (NES, 1986)

"You fulfiled your mission. It will revive peace in space. But, it may be invaded by the other Metroid. Pray for a true peace in space!" Soon to be adopted as NASA's new motto. Except for the Metroid bit.

4



GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS (NES, 1985)

"Congraturation. This story is happy end. Thank you." This said as the hero hugs the princess wearing just his pants. Reminds us there's a toilet roll on sale in Germany called 'Happy End'.

5



CASTLEVANIA 3 (NES, 1986)

"The curse of Dracula has begun. The fate of Europe lies with Trevor." We're all doomed.

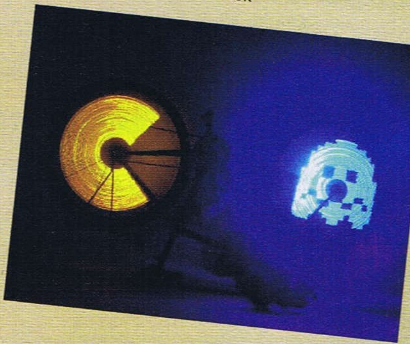
RETRO TAT

Looking spun out by the Wheels of Fortune

We feel a bit guilty about having the word 'tat' at the top of this, because this is actually the best thing we've ever seen. The Pac Man LED Bike Wheel turns the spinny things on your bicycle (wheels) into a shimmering display of retro illumination that'll make passing motorists beep and swear with admiration. And the *best* thing is, LadyAda can show you how to make your own with the mystical power of circuit boards, soldering irons, serial to parallel latches and… oh, we've lost interest. **http://tinyurl.com/hpfuh**

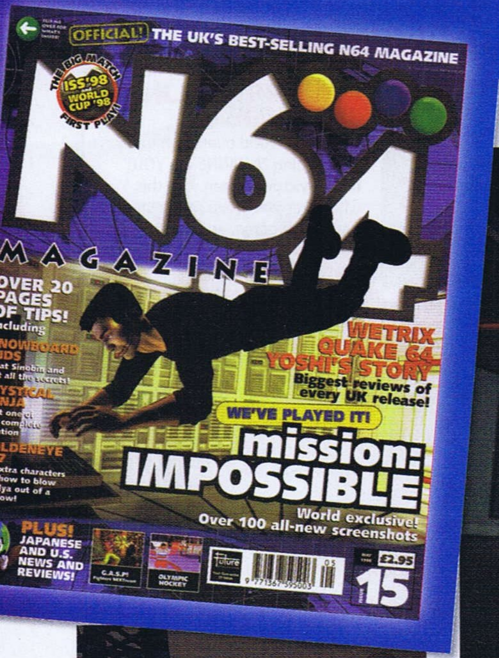
WRITE IN!

Have you found something that's turned old Nintendo stuff into highly desirable retro oddities? Tell us and we'll name and shame it in these very pages. Email: ngc@futurenet.co.uk



THIS MONTH IN NINTENDO

This month, eight years ago – **N64 Magazine, May 1998**

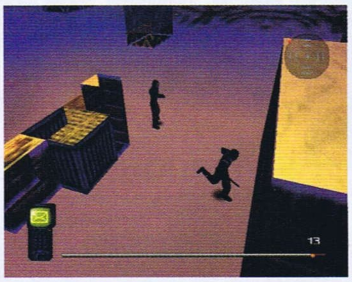




△ Aiming came in for particular criticism. It took *Resi 4* to do it right.



△ You see how bad the film's dialogue would have been if the game's developers had been in charge? Bad like this: "Yeow!"



GAME OF THE MONTH

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

NINTENDO 64

Back in the days when a keypad was Next Generation Gaming, *Mission Impossible*'s gadgets were smart, but not smart enough…

WHAT'S THIS? An N64 interpretation of Tom Cruise stealthing his little legs off in cinemas. Described by us as "the most troubled N64 title to date".

THE BIG DEAL: After *GoldenEye 007*, we were itching to put our tip-toeing-in-a-tux skills to the test again – especially after seeing early screenshots. Disappointment followed: *Mission Impossible* was an ambitious but flawed proto-*Hitman*, with Mr Ethan Hunt cursed to follow increasingly complex shopping lists of objectives, via shopping trolley controls. The gadgets were smart, but the developers had tried to meld brainwork and bulletwork without proper training with the videogames blowtorch.

FROM THE SAME TEAM AS: *Mission Impossible: Operation Surma* on Gamecube, which made all the same mistakes. One day, they'll realise what 'Impossible' and 'Mission' mean.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT: Sales were perky thanks to the license – one million plus in three months – but a *Mission Impossible 2* was scotched after a few months. Don't take our word for the quality: copies are going on Amazon for a frankly insulting 88p.

AND: Tom Cruise reportedly had "a large say" in what his character could get up to – so no innocent civilians were killed, and shooting was the last option. Despite in-game Ethan looking *nothing* like the Cruiseter.



Everyone was playing…

1080 SNOWBOARDING
NINTENDO 64



△ There's 'snowthing' like *1080*! Is that how the old joke goes?



△ All that snow, and we still manage to pile into the pillar.

A defining moment for the genre, *1080 Snowboarding* set the standard for how boarding games should look and feel.

Well, everyone was playing it on *import* – Nintendo's rolling duvets of snowboardable heaven-powder had yet to reach UK shores at this point. But even at inflated import prices (near £100), *1080 Snowboarding* was absolutely irresistible. No game before or since – not *SSX*, not *Evolution Snowboarding*, not even *1080 Avalanche* – has so magically captured the soft 'whoomph' of burying your board in three-foot deep snow. Learning to master the stubborn controls would just sink you even deeper into the action. And for all those still gnashing their teeth over *Super Mario 64*'s racy penguin of hate – you got to use a penguin as a snowboard. Cool!



OTHER REVIEWS THIS MONTH

Susume! Taisen Puzzle Drama
All the drama of slotting coloured blobs into a well. Plus, bowling.
78%

Wetrix
Underrated little puzzler from the *Future Tactics* team.
78%

Quake 64
Clumsy port of the ageing PC gibfest, complete with five-second loading times. *On a cart.*
79%

Worst game…

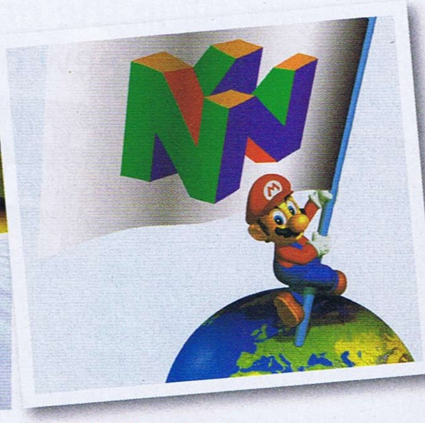
G.A.S.P! FIGHTERS NEXTream
NINTENDO 64





The game that worked Martin up into such a frenzy, he ended up speaking in angry italics for almost an entire paragraph. It really did all start to go downhill with *G.A.S.P! Fighters NEXTream*'s couldn't-make-it-up title (changed to *Deadly Arts* for the West). The combatants were all clichéd fighting types – except, perhaps, for the purple mascara-wearing zombie called "Jimmy" – and tussled for supreme domination with moves that sounded like "a small elastic band snapping". Overall, we called it "an ugly, shambling, brainless missing link." 52%, then.

Other news…
Old news, tastefully repackaged…



EURO-NINTY
Nintendo's European presence had previously consisted of a hodge-podge of press officers and distributors – this month, they established a proper Nintendo of Europe. Hard to believe they didn't have a Euro HQ until over a year after the N64's launch. But then we could just be making all this up.

HUE AND CRY
The original Game Boys had already sold enough 'units' worldwide for the Nintendo president to buy himself a holiday somewhere nice and a pedigree dog. But it was far from over. This month, the Game Boy Color was finally announced: £99, 56 colours and compatible with all GB games.



WRITE ON
We loved N64 Mag letters: "My ears turn green if I say the word, 'manky'", "My interests are hanging around street corners", and "His lips were so fake, they looked as if they'd been stuck on with Pritt Stick." Plus, General Pepper pays Starfox $64 for every ship shot down. Fact!

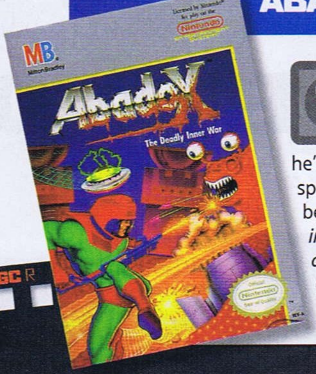


NGC CLASSICS

Bring back the memories – or fill in the brainholes with new ones

CLASSIC BOXART

ABADOX: NES (1989)



The "Deadly Inner War" presumably refers to the battle between artistic license and common sense. Guess which won? This is the third box we've seen where the hero looks like he's "popped an air macaroon", as they say. The bug-eyed space spaghetti is open-mouthed in horror, which is lucky because – come closer, readers – *his teeth don't actually interlock*. Our advice to the artist: make sure you can *draw* a gun before actually drawing one, and at least give the logo a quick scrub before you send it off to the shops. Really.

CLASSIC CUTSCENE

STAR WARS: BATTLE FOR NABOO: NINTENDO 64 (2000)

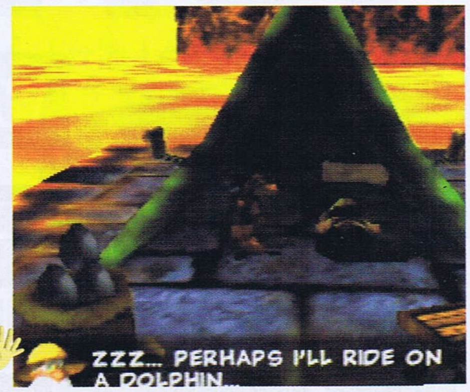
Factor 5 got away with murder here – literally. A year or so after the world walked out of Episode I with hatred for this 'Jar Jar Binks' character seared into their brain's anger modules, Battle for Naboo kicked off with the patois-spewing shambler getting the N64 logo dropped on him. George Lucas must have been off soaking his whiskers in liquid gold when that got approved.



CLASSIC CAMEO

SABREMAN: BANJO-TOOIE NINTENDO 64

We've changed this bit to 'Classic Cameo' to put right an omission from our 'Top 20 Hoaxes' feature in issue… er, 96. Timely. In 2000, Rare's longlost character Sabreman – last seen 15 years earlier in ZX Spectrum game *Pentagram* – turned up in *Banjo-Tooie*. "What's next? Maybe I'll get to ride on a dolphin," he mused, hinting that we'd see *Sabreman* on Gamecube (the console that 'Dolphin' became). Of course, it was Rare's idea of a joke. The safari-hatted warrior *did* return – but on GBA. We're laughing *inside*.

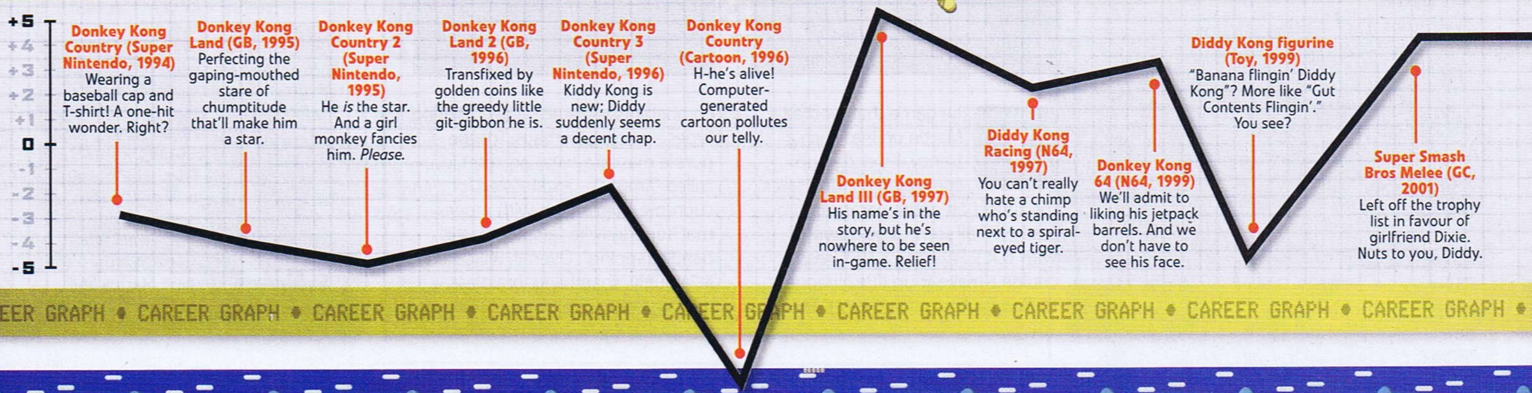


△ **We remember licking our lips over the prospect of the original Sabre Wulf being hidden in *B-T*. Naive, us.**

CAREER GRAPH: DIDDY KONG

Worse than Lanky.





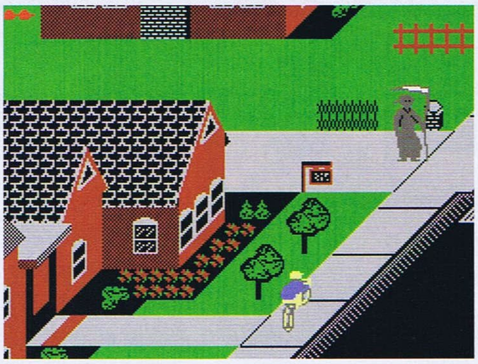
CLASSIC BOSS

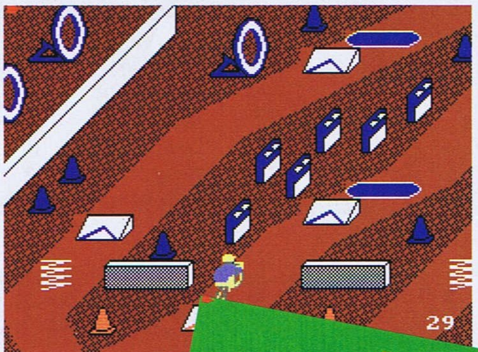
TUROK: DINOSAUR HUNTER: NES (1997)



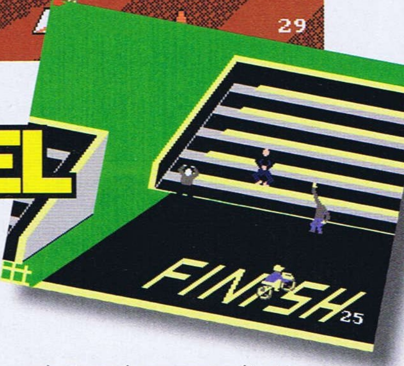


Mummyfunster! That's the word we (vaguely) remember squeaking in our primitive adolescent voices when we came face to face with the lord of *Turok*'s jungle, the boss before the very last level of Acclaim's N64 beaut. People tend to laugh at the Tyrannosuaurus Rex for its shrivelled little forearms, but when you've got a faceful of metallic dino-armour, a head-mounted laser sight that can pin down pitiful humans at fifty paces and the ability to breathe fire, the laughter tends to die away to the odd embarrassed cough. And on top of it all, 'Thunder' (for that is his name) explodes like a petrol station when he dies. What a guy.





△ *Paperboy* was originally in arcades, but it translated very nicely to the NES.



CLASSIC LEVEL

PAPERBOY
NES (1990)

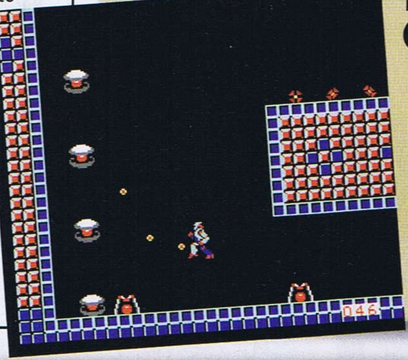
"Amazing paperboy delivers!" said the headlines on the digital newspaper that filled the screen between *Paperboy* rounds. And not, "Amazing paperboy swerves into road to avoid rabid dog and gets surgically attached to the mangled knot of his bike by a passing car." That's news bias for you.

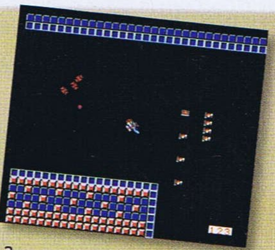
Paperboy's diagonal alley belongs here even though its first level is its *only* level. The idea: to keep subscribers happy by pelting their mailboxes with newspapers, while upsetting non-subscribers by smashing their windows and knocking over gravestones. The gravestones *in their gardens*. This is a game that yelled 'EIGHTIES!' from every orifice – baseball caps worn only backwards; breakdancers spinning on their haircuts. All good clean fun, the only thing that seemed slightly odd was bumping into The Grim Reaper waiting for a bus.

Not an easy game: the head-maths required to cater for bike velocity and newspaper direction – *all diagonally*, mark you – is why children of the '80s are content to sit quiet and broken-brained in front of Pop Idol. But if you managed to make it to the end, your prize was the revelation that this street was *two* levels in one. A stunt track at the very end saw the BMX kid stunting professionally over ramps and rivers, to the delight of a cheering crowd at the finish line. But did you see any of *that* in *Paperboy*'s headlines? Pfff.

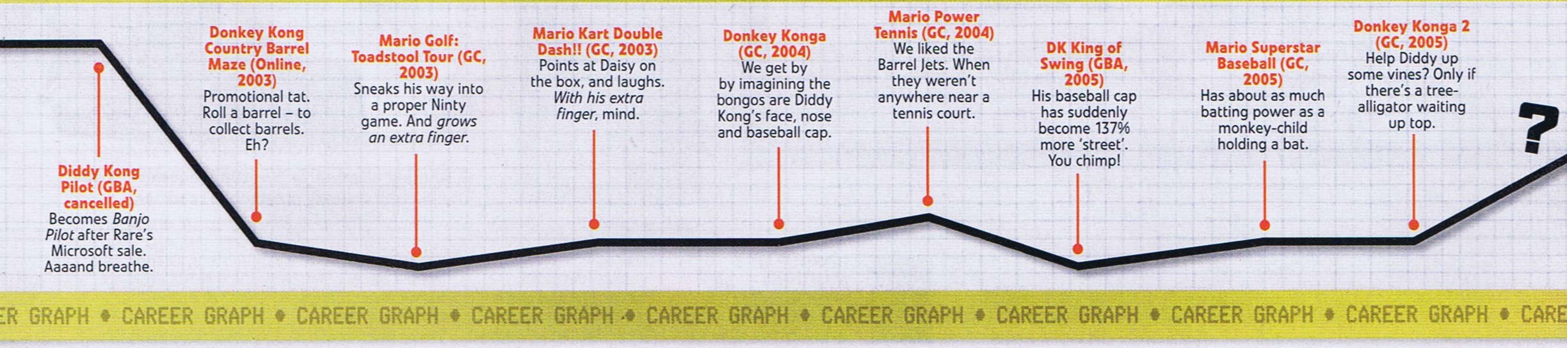
LOST CLASSIC

THEXDER (1985)





Proving that you don't need high dynamic range HDTV bloom lighting – or even, say, a background – to make a pleasing-looking game, *Thexder* was Game Arts' first title (these days they're happily self-destructing with games like *Lunar: Dragon Song* on DS). It was a timely idea for the Transformers generation: a shoot-'em-up starring a robot who could transform into a flying fightercraft of doom whenever the mood took him. Iffy controls might have made it too easy to soar up the enemy's nose when you'd meant to blast him with your auto-aiming futuregun, but *Thexder* was a blaster and a half all the same.



30 MONMOUTH STREET/BATH/BA1 2BW

MAILBOX

EMAIL US!

Got something to say? Run out of stamps? Guards won't let you near a pen? Then log on to the interweb and 'get' us at…

ngc@futurenet.co.uk

Include your name and address so we know who to credit the letter to. Do it! Do it! Do it now!

STAR LETTER

If you send us the best letter of the month, you'll receive a shiny new Gamecube (or GBA/DS) game from our bulging sack of brand new games. Lovely.



"Educational"

I'm currently a maths student, and I have a part-time job as a tutor in a local secondary school, helping youngsters with their geometry and so on. The problem is, the subject lacks relevance and credibility. So it occurred to me: why not release a series of games based on various branches of mathematics? After all, Nintendo could seriously bolster its user-base by appealing to parents concerned about their children's educational well-being. Here are some suggested titles:

1. *The Legendre of Zelda*: Link has a lot going for him, but if we're honest, he's a bit of an intellectual lightweight. Eighteenth-century French Mathematician Adrien-Marie Legendre, on the other hand, was awesome at all kinds of thinking. Join him on his quest to prove Fermat's Last Theorem for n = 5, and possibly rescue Princess Zelda if he has some spare time at lunch.

2. *Super Mario Sun-sinh*: A colourful introduction to the sunny world of hyperbolic functions. Special old-school bonus levels see Mario hopping around on the graph of sinh(x), trying to avoid slipping off to minus infinity.

3. *Donkey Kongruence 64*: Find solutions to all kinds of equations, modulo 64. It's a perfect square, so that will probably make it easier for cognitively-challenged Lanky Kong to get his head around.

4. *Fire Emblem: The Path of Radians*: Conquer your opponents by strategically measuring your angle of attack in radians, nature's angular unit of choice (when you've finished this, have a go at *Six-pi Snowboarding*).

5. *Chrono Triggernometry*: Epic triangle-based RPG from Square (of the hypotenuse) Soft.

6. *Resident Evil 4*: Pretty much the same cinematic crowd-pleaser as before, but on completion players unlock bonus game 'The Mersenne-aries', where they must find prime numbers of the form 2^p - 1 before being rescued by Professor Robert Winston in a helicopter.

7. *Metroid Prime 2*: More fun with prime numbers for those who found The Mersenne-aries too easy. Samus defeats bosses by proving that they're divisible by a non-trivial factor, but watch out for monster robot baddie Quadratix, who throws some polynomial action into the mix.

8. *Mario Power-Series Tennis*: Play 'rallies' with your opponent by alternately calculating successive terms in power series expansions. Don't place your 'shot' outside the radius of convergence, though.

9. F(0)X: Evaluate some function F at the point zero, then multiply by the variable x. Sounds boring? Not at 2,000 km/h, it's not.

10. *Mario Party 7*: An extended probability experiment to determine whether a die is fair by repeatedly rolling it. Actually, forget that idea: even Nintendo would struggle to make that kind of tedium into a decent game.

Please forward these ideas to your contacts at The Big N. I'll settle for a 5% cut.
Michael Southorn, Bristol

Genius! I'm speechless and – if the truth be told – slightly in awe. Ed

Bonus Letters

Please go and ask Shigsy to ask his lethal team of graphics to remake these lethal games.
Cormac ó Maoláin, via email
Okay! Ed

One day the tea virus decided it wanted a cuppa. But there wasn't one in the sterile conditions of the lab.
Alice Young, via email
Riiiight. Ed

That's interesting. I must discuss this with Mr Miyamoto.
Henrie van Meurs, Holland
Yes, I heard he was in Europe recently. Ed

Nintendo seems to just be hoping left-handed people will go away at some point but we won't.
David Yarrow, Chipping Norton
It's time for wrong-handed lefties to stand up and be counted. Ed

Me and my fellow gamers are distraught at the sheer thought of not engaging in a sensible four-way racing experience featuring wheels.
Chris Barnes, Leeds
Oh. Ed

I will send you a painstakingly crafted papier-mâché Tingle, which you will have to stare at for all time.
Euan Cameron, Greenock
How about a Tingle piñata? Ed

"Major flaw"

The DS may not be the 'groundbreaking revolutionary' console we hoped for (touch screen has been out a long time with pocket PCs etc) but it's still a wonder to behold. However, there is one major flaw which I hope the DS Lite will overcome – GBA wireless multiplayer. When I bought my DS I had a large amount of GBA and I hoped I could use them on the DS. Only till after I sold my SP did I find out that it would play GBA games, but no multiplayer. I find that stupid. The DS should have been able to play GBA wirelessly with other DS units. I mean, what's stopping them? Now, the DS Lite is on its way with a number of new features – internet, TV etc. Now, I am impressed with this new stuff, but I feel that the internet feature should have been released with the DS. There are some flaws with the DS and they're making a new one to overcome them? Here's one for ya: make the DS Lite have GBA multiplayer compatible.
Sean Chriscole, Orrell

Internally, the DS Lite is much the same as an ordinary DS – no GBA multiplayer, then, but at least you'll be able to use the TV tuner and web browser with the older models. Ed

"Serious approach"

I have been a loyal Ninty fan since the Game Boy days, and have read your magazine for over two and a half years. Many fellow fans say that Nintendo are taking a brave new step into the world of the extraordinary, but I think they should be taking a different route. Shigsy is, after all, the best games developer in the world, so in my opinion Nintendo should take a serious approach to their future games. Imagine, a realistic racer – real cars, great graphics



△ Another alternative is putting Jaques Villeneuve into Bowser's clunky playmobile roadster.

HONOURABLE MENTIONS
Thanks to veryone who wrote letters, 'fired off' emails and heaved ransom-note bricks through our windows this month, including (but not limited to): Elliot Kruszynski. via email; Gilles Reuse, Belgium; Jonathan Barron, via email; Mathew Williams, Swansea; Nathan Whincup, Leeds; Henry Petrie, via email; Simon Clark, Otley; Chris Richards, via email; Alex Hudson, via email; Jack Parker, via email; Ruth Bowyer, Cheshire; Dom Whittall, via email; Tony

and four-player possibilities. And if Nintendo pulled out all the stops it could be a great seller. After all, Ninty are as good as Microsoft and Sony, are they not? The same goes for a realistic, serious shooter – good graphics, great weapons and 20 years of experience behind it. I am not saying that Ninty should follow rivals, I am just saying that they shouldn't always give their games absurd kiddy plots. I own a lot of *Mario* games, but I also own multi-format games like *Fifa* and *Goldeneye RA*.

I just want the chance to say to my PS2- and Xbox-mad friends, "Shove *Gran Turismo* and *Halo* down your face-hole!" Do any among us not want that chance?

Joe Roche, Leeds

***Nintendo's 20 years of experience have been in making games like* Mario *and* Zelda*. Other companies have got the 'serious' market sewn up, and I seriously doubt Shigsy would find the motivation to get out of bed in the morning if he had to work on something like* Need For Speed *or* Black. Ed**

"Three-step"

As the Chaq, I would like to offer my help to Nintendo. After examining the gaming industry and seeing that being the best at making games, the best at innovation or just being the best at thinking about their customers just doesn't sell consoles, let's face it – every Nintendo console will be beaten to a pulp by Sony's beefed up machines. This is where the Chaq comes in. You see, the Chaq has seen the future and can see Nintendo's Revolution being left on the shelf. Just think about it – Microsoft's first console was the Xbox and that beat the Gamecube. This was probably a big blow to Nintendo and when somebody hurts Nintendo, it hurts me. I feel their pain. The first thing Nintendo should do is join my three-step programme for failing consoles:

Step 1: imitate – this will level the playing field.
Step 2: innovate – this will convince casual gamers and others to go for something better than the norm.
Step 3: dominate – so you can go on making consoles and raise enough money to clone Shigsy.

If Nintendo followed my programme they would be back on top. Imagine if the Gamecube had a DVD player and was not branded a kids' console, just think how many people would have one. Think how irresistible the DS would be to casual gamers if Nintendo matched PSP in technology and innovated and gave it the touch screen and made it look like it was not a child's V-tech computer. If Nintendo signed up to my programme and matched everything the PS3 could do they would get more third-party support. The best thing for Nintendo to do is to release two revolution controllers because the talk on the street is that the console looks cool but the controller looks crap. Just like you, I would like to see Nintendo back on top where they should be.

From the Chaq

***Reggie, I thought I told you to stop bothering me at work.* Ed**

Bonus Letters

And that is my story. From me to you.
Morag Canlin, Leeds
***To me, To… etc.* Ed**

The colourful, stylish N64 logo has been replaced with the bland, sterile angular NGC logo.
Simon Reed, Dorset
***In the summer of 2002!* Ed**

I was thinking about the Revolution, and I don't think Nintendo are going to win the councle war.
Páraic Ó Fatharta, Ireland
***Me neither. The Lib-Dems seems to be the favourites.* Ed**

I will finally be rid of that evil little rat!
Daniel Jarman, Ipswich
***Phew!* Ed**

Understand his pain to the max.
Thomas Cooper, via email
***And keep it real.* Ed**

One of my friends brought an Xbox magazine in to school. It was non-stop Ninty badmouthing!
Robert Hembrow, Oxford
***Damn that Weaver.* Ed**

I have spent more time on Wi-Fi than I have on my girlfriend!
Darren Considine, Shannon
***It's all about priorities.* Ed**

Once you've sent this message to at least 18 contacts, your msn dude will become blue.
Jack Sargeant, via email
***And on behalf of the civilised world, I'd like to thank all you junk-forwarding spammers for helping prevent Hotmail users losing their free accounts. Keep it up.* Ed**

"Rubbish like"

Just wanted to point out a couple of errors you made in issue 117. During the *Sonic Riders* preview you made the mistake of saying, "Still, after rubbish like *Sonic Adventure 2*, this is a breath of fresh air," when you actually meant to say was, "Still, after rubbish like what comes out of our mouths about *Sonic Adventure 2*, this is a breath of fresh air." Now that's MUCH better.

I still fail to see your problem with that game. It sells (and continues to sell) more than *Mario Sunshine* in the Bargain Bin, and is thought to be the best 3D *Sonic* title around. You never talk bad about other characterised games. If you're going to trash a *Sonic* game just stick with *Shadow the Hedgehog* or even *Sonic Adventure DX*, which you guys claimed to be god's gift to *Sonic*, then awarded 38%.

And one more thing, (that you keep doing) it's RINGS not COINS you cronies! Are you trying to make us *Sonic* Fans mad or something?

But enough of my ranting. What if the Hero of Time happened to be female?

Daniel Cole, via email

***Yes, we're hypocritical* Sonic*-ignorant fools (hope you liked last month's* Sonic Riders *cover). But I'm captivated by your picture, and since Creative Corner is full this month, I thought I'd give you the chance to diss us in public.* Ed**



△ Attractive or downright disturbing? The jury's still out.

"Innovative"

When the DS was announced it seemed natural that it would become the haven of innovative games you couldn't play elsewhere. However, several of its best games – *Super Mario DS*, *Mario Kart DS* and *Advance Wars DS* – can all be played on other consoles.

There is no doubt that these are excellent games, and it's great to be able to play them on the move. However, when at home can they really compete with the likes of *Shadow of the Colossus*, *Ico* and *Resident Evil 4*? Of course not. Limited by the technical abilities of a portable console they cannot offer the same immersion and fun as these others. Perhaps I'm being harsh by choosing three of the best games of all time to compare to, but you see my point.

Yet there is one DS game that gets more playtime than any of these 'classics' – *Ouendan*! The limitations of the console become strengths. Can't do realistic 3D graphics? Who cares, when you can tap along while cartoon sagas unfold before your eyes? Out and about you can't play for a long time, so can't become immersed in 'standard' software – but there's always time for a two or three minute blast.

What I'm saying is that if DS developers focus on creating games around the hardware's attributes, they can affect people in a way more involving than the bond between a little boy with horns and an ethereal young girl.

Mike Blake, Chester

***Not everything can be the best in its field, and the bad is a necessary counterbalance for the good – for every Craig Bellamy, you've got to have a Shefki Kuqi. It's like yin and yang. My point being, erm…* Ed**

CORRECTION CORNER

"Official technique"

In Issue 117, in the *Mario Kart DS* tips section, here's what you said about snaking: "Snaking is generally a practice reserved for heels, blackguards and the very desperate indeed. It is, in short, frowned upon in polite company. Never do it when playing friends online, and only in local area Wi-Fi matches with everyone's consent."

Hate to break it to you, but snaking is an official technique. Ask anyone who worked on the game. You're most likely upset because you don't have the skill to learn how to do it.

Ian Anderson, via email

***I have the skill. I just don't like ruining a game (and my thumbs) by having to waggle the D-pad for the entire duration of a race. As for snaking being official, well, they wouldn't admit to releasing a bugged game, would they?* Ed**

Pang, Orpington; Heather Deruelle, via email; Barney Williams, Bath; Kevin Grant, London; Simon Wardle, via email; Tom Pilkington, via email; Charlie Fisher, via email; Sarah Reid, Manchester; Daniel Davidson, via email; Alan O'Brien, via email; Richard Erik Whitburn Haugen, Norway; Jordan Crownshaw, Luton; Colúm McClelland, Co Down; Seán Matthews, Tullow; Gary Maylin, Isle of Man; Howard Webster, via email; David Lawless, Milton Keynes; Stelios, via email; Will Hughes, Gloucester; Richard Freedman, via email; Jack Tomlinson, Burnley; Michael Southorn, Bristol; Sean Chriscole, Orrell; Joe Roche, Leeds; Daniel Cole, via email; Mike Blake, Chester; Ross Fuller, Clevedon. Cheers, folks! Until next time…

"Should I give up gaming for good?"

"Obesity"

Having read the letter in issue 117 suggesting the inclusion of a sword kata minigame in *Twilight Princess*, an idea struck me. You know how scientitians are always going on about childhood obesity and how young people need to get more exercise? Well something like this could be just the thing. If people are given the option of learning these sword katas as part of a minigame/quest, then they may be encouraged to take up a proper martial art, such as karate or tae kwon do. It doesn't have to stop there though. How about being able to strap the controller to your leg, so that you can take penalties in football games yourself? Or to have a keepie-up minigame in *Fifa Street*? Or being able to use the controller to shoot hoops yourself in *NBA Street*? Taking your own golf shots, making your own tennis swings; the possibilities are indeed many, and could encourage people to take up the sports that will get them the exercise that scientitians want them to get. It could be just one more of Nintendo's contributions to making the world a better place.
Ross Fuller, Clevedon

Strap the controller to your leg? They'd have to bundle the Revolution with special plastic sheets for laminating your windows. Ed

"Give up"

I often think I am a disgrace to videogaming. I can't play *Metroid*, I can't get through the first Forsaken Fortress in *Wind Waker*, I even find *Mario Sunshine* hard. The only games I'm any good at are life/farming sims (*Animal Crossing/ Harvest Moon*) and rhythm actions (*Dancing Stage Mario Mix* and *Donkey Konga 2* mostly). I don't seem to have much taste in games either – I seem drawn to games that reviews hate, like *Shadow the Hedgehog*, *Kirby's Air Ride*, or even *Pokémon Channel*. Should I keep playing or give up gaming for good?
Jasmine Lindsay, Wiltshire



△ "I'd hate to be responsible for making somone doubt their gaming. All I wanted was a husband."

Hey, don't give up – it's better to have 'unique' taste than to follow the herd. Besides, you've probably got further in Metroid than I ever will. Ed

"Broadband"

Years ago, I traded in my old N64 and all my games to fund my Gamecube game-buying, but I've long since realised that so many of the games I sold are the ones I miss the most. So when Nintendo announced Revolution's 'back catalogue', I was delighted. However, recent facts emerging about this feature have made me much more sceptical.

I don't have broadband, nor will I be gaining access to it any time in the near future. Now, I thought that Nintendo were all for making games that could be played by anyone, without requiring internet access, least of all the most expensive kind, but it's looking increasingly likely that the back catalogue will require broadband access. I was wondering if you could shed some light on the situation – will Revolution's downloadable retro games be available in any other way, rather than direct broadband connection through the console?

Of course, the other issue, and the one that I assume will have all other potential Revolution buyers greatly disheartened, is the price. £19.99 for N64 games? What are they thinking? There's no chance it'll catch on if the best games available through the system are that price. There's no way I'd be willing to pay £20 for the likes of *Goldeneye*, even if they are running at 60fps, when I could quite easily get them for much cheaper in their original form.

So, what do you think – as a non-broadbandee, unwilling to shell out 20 quid for games I could quite happily find second-hand for a fiver, am I better off just buying an old N64 or should I wait it out?
Dan Robinson, Skipton

They haven't announced any pricing details, and judging by the costs on the equivalent Xbox 360 service – where most games cost less than £5 – I can't imagine anything will be as expensive as you fear. The broadband issue is the one you won't be able to escape. Two major factors in the appeal of downloadable games are the lack of distribution costs and instant availability – both of which are lost if the games are sold on disc. Here's hoping they release compilation DVDs, memory cards or something similar for offline gamers. Ed

"Proper old"

After having nearly all of my game saves deleted (some 20 games 100% done or thereabouts) due to a third-party memory card that surprisingly managed to last three

CREATIVE CORNER

For the far-reaching artistic talents of the average and not-so-average reader…



"Peach"

Dear Mr Green (because you're my favourite!),

I've always enjoyed your pages of retro goodness. However I see you are missing a very important site from your repertoire of online Ninty findings. You poor underprivileged soul! The site that you are missing out on can be found here: www.peach-paradise.com

Like Princess Peach? Like weird collections of Nintendo merchandise? Like nerds in cosplay? Then baby, its Christmas!! Check it out!

PS I've attached a picture of myself to whet your whistle.
Princess Peach, via email

Wow! Why is Greener your favourite? I'm much taller, and have far bigger feet. Ed

"Swedish"

After my Swedish friend got me to buy *M&L 2*, I went and drew myself a baby Waluigi. Admit it, you saw this coming!
Raymond Oman, Alloa

Nope, it's a bolt from the blue. Ed

"Baby"

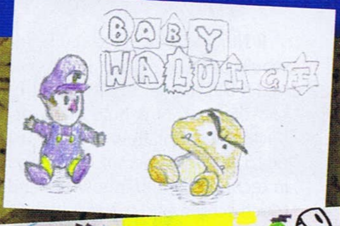
This is my drawing of Baby Mario in a Baby Battle field, for your creative corner.
William Leggatt, Brighton

Cheers! Ed

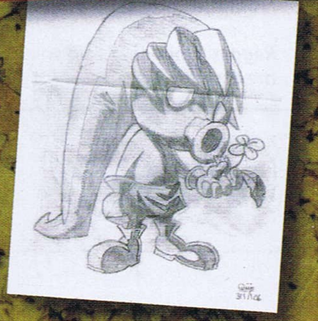
"Deku"

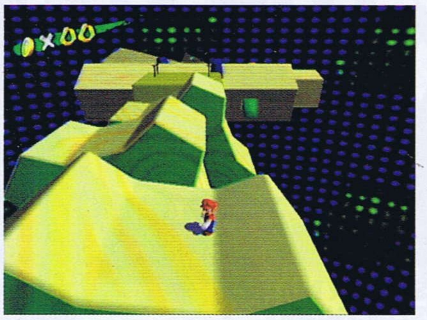
Here's a picture I drew of Deku Link last night. Sorry about the folds, I tried to get rid of them on Photoshop but it looked wrong. Hope you like it.
Tom Lambert, Bath

Very nice. Ed









△ ***Super Mario Sunshine*'s secret levels are a break from FLUDD, or 'Mr Charisma' as we call him.**

years before conking out, I decided to look on the positive side which was that I now had an excuse to replay a ton of games that I haven't played in a long time. I decided to start with *Super Mario Sunshine* and it quickly dawned on me that the best bit about the game was not the use of FLUDD or the length/difficulty of the game, but the 3D Secret stages hidden in the levels that don't use FLUDD. These are ALL great fun to play and are certainly a fantastic diversion from the main game.

What bothers me is that Nintendo have definitely missed out on an opportunity this generation for releasing a *Mario* game in the same vein as these retro stages in *SMS*. I couldn't give a monkeys if the backgrounds were similar to the ones used in *SMS*, because quite frankly they were suitable enough to do the job. What counts is the fact that there is some proper old-school platforming (eg leaps of faith) done in a 3D way, and it's highly enjoyable. If Nintendo released a game like this with a massive number of levels then it would be a lovely and nostalgic slice of retro-meets-modern gaming, and it shames me that Nintendo have missed out on this opportunity and instead churned out the annual crap-fest that is *Mario Party*. I'm sure many other people agree with me on this and if it won't appear this generation (I can't imagine it taking particularly long to develop – they already have a game engine for starters) then it would be a pleasure to play something like this on Revolution.
Alexander Davies, Llandeilo

***I agree, those were my favourite parts of* Sunshine*, too. And if Nintendo was worried that releasing a retro-style 3D* Mario *game would disappoint the fans waiting for* Mario 128*, why not stick Luigi or some other character in it?* Ed**

"Pwned"

At Christmas, I was lucky enough to get a brand spanking new laptop and a copy of *Half-Life 2*, along with a wireless router. Thus, I was in a position to try out both *Mario Kart DS* online and *Half-Life 2 Deathmatch* online.

First off I tried *Mario Kart*, and sure enough, the process was simple, easy, and the online competition was fair. Then, I tried playing *Half-Life 2* online. The difference was enormous. Whereas *Mario Kart* was easy to get set up, *Half-Life 2* was a nightmare. It gave me a long list of servers I could potentially connect to, all with very close-knit community sounding names.

Put off by this, I tried to play against a friend who also had *Half-Life 2*. To my dismay, I found that the friends network was down (and has been down for over a year) and I couldn't play. So I went with a public server. It started quite well; I was doing okay, in about third position, when all of a sudden, some typical internet hacks joined the game. Soon I was in last place, respawning and getting killed again in a matter of nanoseconds. To add insult to injury, these idiots then began to 'internet spiel', calling me a 'n00b' and telling me that I had got 'pwned'.

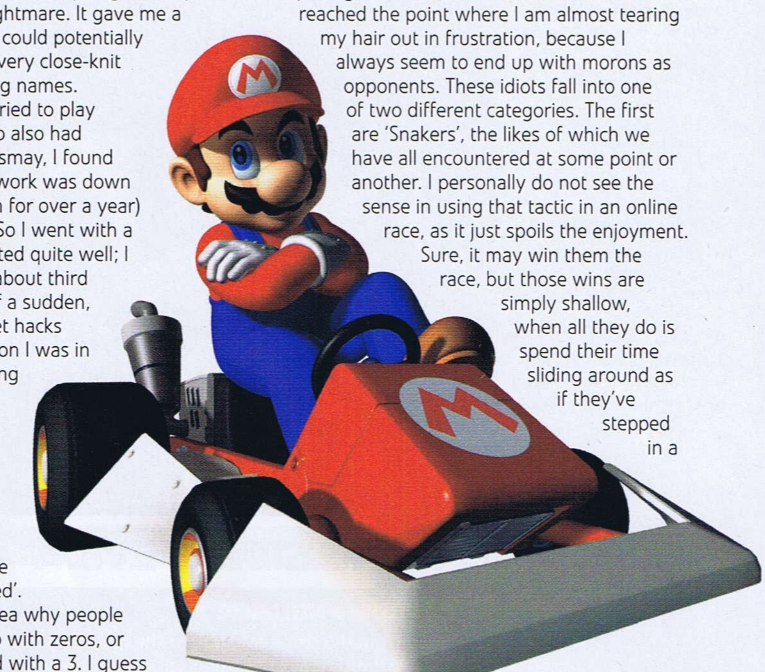
Now, I have no idea why people have to replace an o with zeros, or why an e is replaced with a 3. I guess they're kind of close on the keyboard, but that's no excuse for shoddy spelling (Well done AlphaDream for mocking this in *Partners In Time*). Nevertheless, the experience was ruined, and I promptly left the game.

The point I'm trying to make is that I, starting from relatively equal points with regard to *Half-Life 2 Deathmatch* and *Mario Kart DS*, was startled by the difference in experience. And that got me thinking. If online gaming is the way forward, then surely everyone should follow Nintendo's example.
Daniel Rouse, High Wycombe

***Personally, the last thing I want when playing an online game is some anonymous git 'trash talking' in my ear through a robot voice filter. I don't mind the option of choosing who I play next, though.* Ed**

"Snakers"

I have finally been able to indulge in the joys of *Mario Kart* online thanks to the arrival of my dongle. In recent times, however, I have reached the point where I am almost tearing my hair out in frustration, because I always seem to end up with morons as opponents. These idiots fall into one of two different categories. The first are 'Snakers', the likes of which we have all encountered at some point or another. I personally do not see the sense in using that tactic in an online race, as it just spoils the enjoyment. Sure, it may win them the race, but those wins are simply shallow, when all they do is spend their time sliding around as if they've stepped in a slippery dog turd. Honestly! Where on earth is the fun in that?



If that wasn't bad enough, I have to contend with the 'Quitters' who are even worse. These abysmal racers join a championship and then disconnect as soon as they lose. This means when you're up against three of them, it's very unlikely you'll make it to the end of the fourth and final race, and when that happens you begin to realise why Nintendo hasn't added a chat function. What is wrong with people who play online these days? Why can't they just have a simple fun game without the need to participate in such puerile actions? I guess I'm only in a minority with this but it really does get on my nerves, or maybe I'm not alone in having such an opinion…
DJ Fryer, Wiltshire

***Some people actually like snaking (see Correction Corner). They're completely and utterly wrong, of course. As for quitters, the best way to stop that sort of behaviour is to have something at stake in each race – ranking points – which you lose if you drop out. The game could be split into two zones – a fun, non-competitive area where you might have people quitting on you, and a separate pro zone for those who want to play for keeps. Maybe as Nintendo gains online experience, we'll see this in future sequels.* Ed**

SO TELL ME THIS...

Seek knowledge here and all (well, most*) questions shall be answered for ye

1. What's this about you making a new magazine?
2. Is the Twilight Princess *going to be the last* Zelda *game?*
3. How much will the Revolution games cost? (hopefully no more than £40)
Christopher Richards, via email

1. Watch this space, my friend.
2. No.
3. N64 games launched at £60, until everyone settled on £40 after a couple of years. That seems to have turned into £50 now, thanks to Xbox 360. So, erm, I don't have a clue. Blork!

My memory card just randomly wiped itself clear of completed game saves of Resi 4, Metroid Prime 1&2, Timesplitters 2&3, F-Zero GX, Harvest Moon, Wind Waker, Majora's Mask, Ocarina of Time *and loads more! I know that's why you're not supposed to buy third-party memory cards but the price and the size was too good to resist. I used to think that people just exaggerated the problems, which leads me to ask how they can sell things that are so faulty? And what is the biggest and safest card on the market?*
Max, Wales

They'd stop selling them if nobody bought them. Lik-Sang.com sells a USB memory card which allows you to back up your data on a PC. That's your safest bet.

I thought I completed Mario Kart DS *within two days of getting it (both Grand Prix and Missions), but then I saw your mission walkthrough in issue 116 and it says there are 7 levels. How do I get the last set of missions?*
Ben Hooper, via email

Get three stars in everything.

When I first registered my DS online with Mario Kart*, a message came up saying 'from now on, only use this DS to play* Mario Kart*.' I am tempted to buy a DS Lite, but if I can't play* Mario Kart *then what's the point?*
Rathe Temple-Green, St Leonards-on-Sea

You can swap your online data to a new DS. The original one will then be erased.

**The odd one or two*

NGC TOP 20

THE BEST GAMES FOR YOUR GAMECUBE!

GC TOP 20







1 RESIDENT EVIL 4 97

CAPCOM ■ NGC/104

Freed from the stumbling gait of the groaning undead and the limitations of last generation technology, *Resi 4* not only reinvented the series but also successfully reinvigorated the stagnant survival/horror style with an unprecedented level of innovation. For while the atmosphere of the game remains suitably suffocating, the dynamic pacing is virtually perfect, the villager carnage visceral and the visual spectacle sublime.

2 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER 97



NINTENDO NGC/81

The sumptuous cel-shading may draw the eye, but what lies underneath will also delight your senses: magic and mystery imbues every detail.

3 METROID PRIME 97



NINTENDO NGC/76

Distinctly different from a FPS in ambition and execution, *Prime* is supremely rewarding in the way it unveils new weaponry and stunning environments.

4 SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE 96



NINTENDO NGC/73

The island of Delfino is home to one of Mario's finest moments, with near perfect controls. The simple brilliance of the squirty backpack is an utter joy.

5 METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES 94



NINTENDO NGC/88

Injecting a little light and shade into Samus Aran's world, this follow-up also adds a parallel world, a shadowy rival and a solid multiplayer.

6 MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!! 93



NINTENDO NGC/88

This remains true to the winning formula of Chain Chomps, crates and power sliding karts, despite AI rivals who keep sticking shells up your tailpipe.

7 F-ZERO GX 92



NINTENDO NGC/85

Despite an urban sprawl of swirling neon, there's never a flaw in this fixed 60 frames per second racer: it nourishes the eyes and the soul.

8 PIKMIN 2 92



NINTENDO NGC/99

So perfectly conceived, so wonderfully crafted, so perfectly planned that you won't actually notice you're playing a resource management sim.

TOP FIVE ACTION ADVENTURE



RESIDENT EVIL 4
It's hillbillies' heads you're a poppin' this time in a sequel that makes the series pulse with terror once more.

HITMAN
Brazen or bathed in blood, the bar-coded baldy brilliantly lets you choose how to ply your dark trade.

SECOND SIGHT
The *Timesplitters* team slickly hits the mark with a tale of telekinesis in this paranormal thriller you'll want to possess.

METAL GEAR SOLID
An already superb stealth game, enhanced, re-voiced and prettied up into a delight.

ETERNAL DARKNESS
As skilfully compelling and claustrophobic as any horror novel, this uses every shock in the book.

TOP FIVE ROLE-PLAYING GAMES



ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER
Brilliantly straddling the divide between mere adventure and something more substantial.

HARVEST MOON: A WONDERFUL LIFE
Wonderful, but ploughing a bit of a lone furrow as the only agricultural RPG.

FIRE EMBLEM: PATH OF RADIANCE
As much a soldierly strategy as an RPG, but one with real power.

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE: EPISODE I & II
If you have the technology, this is a sprawling epic in both scale and longevity.

SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS
A 'traditional' RPG rescued from the Dreamcast that may now be showing its age.

9 SOUL CALIBUR 2 91



NAMCO
NGC/85

Combining artistry with brutality, this fast-paced fighter relies not on remembering and retaining huge strings of combos but on reactions and reflexes.

10 TIMESPLITTERS 2 91



EIDOS
NGC/73

Stylised to perfection, this shooter trawls history for its armoury and foes but never betrays its *Goldeneye* heritage. The multiplayer is divine.

11 SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE 91



NINTENDO
NGC/68

Let Peach finally exact her revenge on Bowser, slap Samus or just gang up and punch Kirby repeatedly on the beak. This is an anarchic joy.

12 HARVEST MOON: A WONDERFUL LIFE 91



UBISOFT
NGC/91

The beauty in this bucolic masterpiece lies in the relaxed romancing, slow changing of seasons and lazy exploration of this odd little village.

13 HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN 91



EIDOS
NGC/82

The squeaky-headed shed-dwelling killer is merely the agent for you to provide the thought and tactics in this fine example of freeform butchery.

14 MARIO POWER TENNIS 91



NINTENDO
NGC/104

With the special moves turned off, this is a tactical battle of 'pure tennis' that shames many serious sims, but flip them back on and the aces will fly…

15 PRINCE OF PERSIA: SANDS OF TIME 91



UBISOFT
NGC/90

Tight controls, precise puzzles and the Prince's supple acrobatics contrast with fluid animation, a flowing plot and a feeling of freedom.

16 PAPER MARIO: THE THOUSAND YEAR DOOR 91



NINTENDO
NGC/100

An all too often overlooked RPG that has depth and variety far beyond its superficial dimensions. Innovative combat and clever use of 2D.

17 FIRE EMBLEM: PATH OF RADIANCE 90



NINTENDO
NGC/114

This strategy game with added role-playing engages you on an emotional level as well as a cerebral one as the climactic battles unfold.

18 WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM 90



NINTENDO
NGC/87

Despite the slightly more choppy framerate on the PAL version, this aquatic racer lets you wallow in wonderfully precise controls and effects.

19 BATTALION WARS 90



NINTENDO
NGC/113

A near perfect blend of the sublime yet stylised strategy of *Advanced Wars* with a control system that makes the commanding of immense armies a joy.

20 VIEWTIFUL JOE 90



CAPCOM
NGC/84

Side-scrolling and hard – two elements that seem to have deterred folks from what is a wonderful slick, ferociously quick cel-shaded fighter.

TOP FIVE SHOOTING GAMES



METROID PRIME
Spiffing sci-fi shooter that stuns with its graphical power.

METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES
As above but darker, moodier and with multiplayer too.

TIMESPLITTERS 2
This polished FPS shot through with humour and wonderful extras.

CONFLICT: DESERT STORM 2
It isn't all about you in this team-driven Gulf War One shooter.

TIMESPLITTERS: FUTURE PERFECT
Not perfect, but it does include a hugely beefed up story and solo mode.

TOP FIVE PLATFORM GAMES



SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE
1,000 miles away from the painful *Party* games, this is all that is good and right about Nintendo in one bright package.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: SANDS OF TIME
An innovative, time bending tale that you really should own. The only thing that's baggy or loose here is the trousers.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: WARRIOR WITHIN
Darker, meaner and 'mature', with a touch too much fighting.

LUIGI'S MANSION
Joyful – albeit brief –tale of the brother's property nightmare, armed with a flashlight and a vacuum cleaner.

DONKEY KONG: JUNGLE BEAT
Bongo-driven platformer proffers ludicrous levels of clap-powered fun.

NGC TOP 20

THE TOP GBA GAMES YOUR MONEY CAN BUY!

GBA TOP 20



TOP FIVE SHOOTING GAMES



GUNSTAR FUTURE HEROES
Big, bold and slightly garish. It skimps on longevity but not on fun.

GRADIUS
Simple and classic. Infinite credits also take some of the edge off.

DOOM
A great port that is faithful, right down to the sound and the slightly disappointing ending.

BALLISTIC: ECKS VS SEVER 2
Hugely ambitious and heavily armed FPS that even offers four-player blasting.

ALIEN HOMINID
A fittingly hard modern take on the fine tradition of 2D shooters.

TOP FIVE RACING GAMES



MARIO KART SUPER CIRCUIT
Including all the elements that made the SNES version a classic but with even more fantastic extras to try and unlock.

F-ZERO MAXIMUM VELOCITY
Every bit as wilfully hard as it was before and every bit as good.

GTA ADVANCE
Proper handling, proper cars and proper racing.

STUNTMAN
A bold conversion that transcends the weak console original with brilliant screens and huge stunts.

F-ZERO FALCON DENSETSU
A story-driven, anime-animated version that may be a touch too easy for hardcore *F-Zero* fans.







1 ADVANCE WARS 95

NINTENDO ■ NGC/61
Strip back the deliciously cheeky sprites and underneath you will find a fiendishly sophisticated and perfectly balanced strategy game. Even though you might not think you'll love waging war or waiting in turn to use your think-sponge, with head-to-head play via a link cable, fights taking place with tanks, planes and ships, and close-to-infinite replay value, *Advance Wars* is as close to touching the face of god as man has ever come.

2 SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 2 94



NINTENDO NGC/64
With a few tweaks to moderate the unbending difficulty, this doesn't make any radical changes to the excellent original, and is the better for it.

3 ADVANCE WARS 2 93



NINTENDO NGC/84
More of the same but with big tank-shaped knobs on, this carefully considered sequel will devour months of your temporal allotment on this earth-life.

4 MARIO KART SUPER CIRCUIT 93



NINTENDO NGC/59
Cherry picking the best moments from the SNES version and even the N64 edition, this is great solo, but sublime once you link it up with four GBAs.

5 FIRE EMBLEM 92



NINTENDO NGC/97
With the added advantage of greater emotional attachment to your warriors, this turn-based tale feels more *Advanced* on the battlefield.

6 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST 92



NINTENDO NGC/77
Considered by many to be second only to *Ocarina*, this has the finest RPG adventures of the 16 bit era but also the excellent *Four Swords* multiplayer.

7 SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 3: YOSHI'S ISLAND 92



NINTENDO NGC/74
Known and loved for its wholly original levels and the barrage of mini-games, this allows Yoshi to take the reigns with perfectly crafted design.

8 MARIO & LUIGI: SUPERSTAR SAGA 91



NINTENDO NGC/89
The plumbing pair appear in a colourful RPG that mixes puzzle and platform parts with a turn-based combat system that actually rewards reactions.

9 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE MINISH CAP 91



NINTENDO NGC/101

Along with adding the power to shrinky-dink the Rinkster, this smaller *Zelda* continues the tradition of finely honed adventuring and satisfying dungeons.

10 GOLDEN SUN 91



NINTENDO NGC/83

At first the random battles seem like an annoyance but they are key to the way this engaging and highly polished RPG reveals its depths.

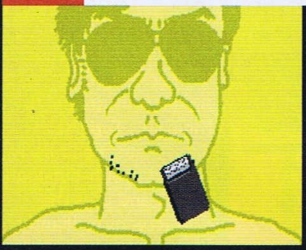
11 FINAL FANTASY TACTICS ADVANCE 91



SQUARE ENIX NGC/87

Any notions of simplicity in the story or swordplay are quickly confounded, for this turn-based RPG offers almost infinite variety to the player.

12 WARIO WARE TWISTED! 90



NINTENDO NGC/117

Combining the novelty of 200 games quick enough to induce epilepsy and the genius of a tilt-sensitive cartridge, this'll twist your wrists in knots.

13 WARIO WARE, INC 90



NINTENDO NGC/82

Imagine pure joy, distilled, boiled down and served in five second shots. Very simple in concept, but executed with verve, speed and cheek.

14 POKÉMON RUBY / SAPPHIRE (IMPORTS) 90



NINTENDO NGC/83

The greatest formula since $E=mc^2$: the collecting and fighting dynamic hasn't really changed, but the sheer scale makes these RPGs hugely entertaining.

15 HARVEST MOON: FRIENDS OF MINERAL TOWN 90



NATSUME NGC/91

There might not be much 'Ooh' to go with the 'Aar', but this soothing if slightly slow farming sim has charm, chickens and dirty hoes.

16 SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 4 90



NINTENDO NGC/86

A top notch conversion of probably the most fondly remembered 8-bit platformer. It's short, but the desire to complete it time and again feels unchanged.

17 KURU KURU KURURIN 90



NINTENDO NGC/56

The 'ducks in spaceships' plot isn't the best thing here. That'd be the guide-a-rotating-stick-through-a-maze-against-the-clock mechanic.

18 METROID: ZERO MISSION 89



NINTENDO NGC/92

Intelligent puzzles, sprawling levels and a huge number of secrets make this refined retread almost as magnificent as *Prime* itself.

19 GUNSTAR FUTURE HEROES 89



SEGA/TREASURE NGC/113

Showing off the GBA's ability to spin, scale and scroll immensely bright sprites, this former Megadrive shooter looks anything but flat. Treasure it.

20 POKÉMON PINBALL: RUBY & SAPPHIRE 89



NINTENDO NGC/87

Despite the 'Mon collecting, there's more to these steel balls than branding. Perfect physics, a slew of mini-tables and extra games elevate it.

TOP FIVE SPORTS GAMES



MARIO GOLF: ADVANCE TOUR
More than just a thoroughly fantastic golf game, it's a golfing RPG too.

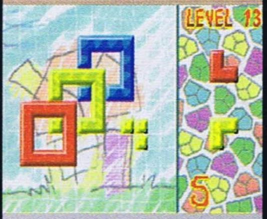
MARIO TENNIS POWER TOUR
Simple, addictive, brilliant. Not really a sim but a wonderful game in its own right.

VIRTUA TENNIS
The visuals aren't very virtual, but as a simulation of the sport it is unmatched.

INTERNATIONAL SUPERSTAR SOCCER
With well-mapped controls and plenty of pace and passing, this is a solid sim.

TIGER WOODS 2004
Crammed with various options and modes.

TOP FIVE PUZZLE GAMES



IT'S MR PANTS
A top down blockbuster that, despite the in-jokes with Rare's mascot, is unpretentiously addictive.

CHUCHU ROCKET!
Like a high speed and highly competitive version of *Lemmings* with spaceships. And mice.

DR MARIO & PUZZLE LEAGUE
A twin pack of two slightly aged but rather jolly and bright puzzle classics that won't fail to entertain.

PUYO POP
Shifting the screen and not the blocks adds originality to an already demanding puzzler.

ZOOO
Harder and more involving than *Zoo Keeper* on the DS, although it is less instantly appealing.

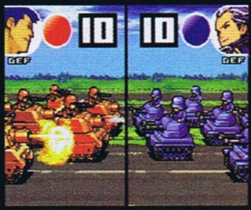
NGC TOP 20

THE 20 DS GAMES YOU NEED TO OWN!

DS TOP 20









1 ADVANCE WARS DUAL STRIKE 95

NINTENDO ■ NGC/110

It looks exactly the same as the GBA games and really doesn't make particularly great use of the DS, but despite these flaws, *Advance Wars Dual Strike* still manages to be absolutely brilliant. Possibly the most addictive game ever made, this turn-based strategy affair is deep, tactical and offers literally months of play. This is a speck of gold dust amongst a watery pit of games, and is undoubtedly our favourite DS game yet.

2 MARIO KART DS 94



NINTENDO
NGC/114

The best *Mario Kart* ever. 32 tracks, a sprawling Mission Mode, great handling, wireless multiplayer and, best of all, online racing. Woo hoo!

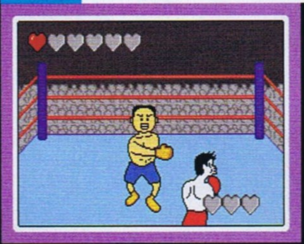
3 ANIMAL CROSSING: WILD WORLD 92



NINTENDO
NGC/118

Very similar to the Gamecube version, but now you can go online and four players can play simultaneously in this charm-your-socks-off virtual life.

4 WARIO WARE TOUCHED! 91



NINTENDO
NGC/105

While easier than *Wario Ware*, this is one of the DS's premier titles. You've not lived until you've blown into the mic to suspend a man above a giant mouth.

5 KIRBY POWER PAINTBRUSH 91



NINTENDO
NGC/113

At last! A brilliant *Kirby* game. This is somewhat similar to *Yoshi's Touch and Go*, and is a meaty, substantial, intricate 2D platformer.

6 MARIO AND LUIGI: PARTNERS IN TIME 90



NINTENDO
NGC/116

An intricate sequel to the GBA's *Superstar Saga* that is beautifully crafted, laugh-out-loud funny, and uses the two screens brilliantly. Highly recommended.

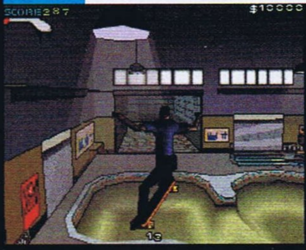
7 SUPER MARIO 64 DS 90



NINTENDO
NGC/105

While not quite the perfect fit for the DS, this rejigglement of the N64 classic is still utterly superb, with new minigames and wireless multiplayer.

8 TONY HAWK'S AMERICAN SK8LAND 90



ACTIVISION
NGC/115

The first online DS game, and one of the very best Tony Hawk's games ever made, in proper 3D, with all the great tricks and stunts. There are riches here.

BEST OF THE REST



RIDGE RACER
Crappy touch screen handling aside, this is a fine rendition of Namco's racer, and brings back plenty of happy memories of the excellent *Ridge Racer 64*.

NINTENDO TOUCH GOLF
Golf's an acquired taste, but there's far worse ways to acquire it than with this brilliantly accessible slice of sticksie-ball from the Big N.

SNOWBOARD KIDS
Sadly not as cute or fun as the N64 original, but despite its faults this is still fast and frantic snow-based racing with added weapons.

BOMBERMAN DS
Dull as ditchwater in single player, this is redeemed by *Bomberman* multiplayer brilliance. Eight players, bombs galore… magic.

LOST IN BLUE
Stranded kids' adventure where survival on a desert island is the order of the day. Initially lots of hard work and very annoying, it blossoms into something special.

NANOSTRAY
Old-school 2D shooter that's been lovingly rendered with splendid 3D backgrounds. It's quite old-fashioned, but is compelling and hectic.

METROID PRIME PINBALL
A wonderful pinballer that successfully evokes the *Metroid* universe. Beautiful graphics and fine flipper action make for a top notch time-waster.

PAC 'N ROLL/PAC PIX
Two fabulous *Pac Man* reinventions. The first is a *Monkey Ball*-style platformer, the second a riff on the original *Pac Man* where you draw the man himself. Both are superb.

RESIDENT EVIL: DEADLY SILENCE
The first *Resident Evil* exhumed yet again, but there are enough DS-specific bits to make this worth shambling though all over again.

SUPER MONKEY BALL: TOUCH & ROLL
The control system isn't as good as it was on the 'cube and the camera's a bit dodgy, but this still delivers simian shivers of excitement.

9 SONIC RUSH 90



SEGA
NGC/114

Sonic Rush is the speedy hedgehog's best game in *years*. Breathtakingly fast and well designed, this takes full advantage of the dual screens.

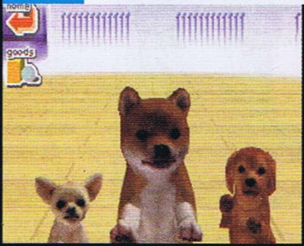
10 METEOS 89



BANDAI
NGC/108

The best puzzler on the DS, and that's saying something, with *Zoo Keeper* and *Polarium* around. Hard to explain but thrilling to play: you need it.

11 NINTENDOGS 88



NINTENDO
NGC/108

The face-meltingly cute game that 'made' the DS. It's basic, but offers possibly the best use of the DS yet, with brilliant mic and touch screen application.

12 ZOO KEEPER 88



IGNITION
NGC/105

So simple, it's animal head-swappingly fantastic, not to mention terrifyingly addictive, endlessly playable and one of the best puzzlers ever.

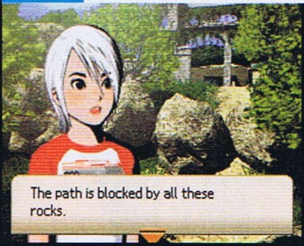
13 PROJECT RUB 85



SEGA
NGC/105

Superior to its recent sequel, this charming slice of lady-wooing madness is chock-full of minigames and is a dandy alternative to *Wario Ware*.

14 ANOTHER CODE: TWO MEMORIES 85



NINTENDO
NGC/108

A brief but hugely enjoyable point-and-click adventure that uses the all of the DS's features in novel ways. It's short, but full of really good puzzles.

15 CASTLEVANIA: DAWN OF SORROW 84



KONAMI
NGC/112

A brilliant-looking hack-and-slash trawl through Dracula's castle that has huge depth and plays like a supernatural version of *Metroid*.

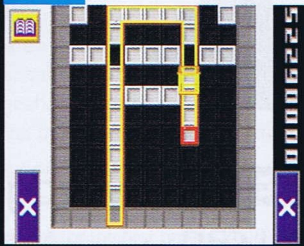
16 PHEONIX WRIGHT: ACE ATTORNEY 82



CAPCOM
NGC/118

Objection! Shout that at every opportunity in this fab courtroom sim that lets you gather evidence and pick testimonies apart. Silly and wholly original.

17 POLARIUM 82



NINTENDO
NGC/105

An ingenious little tile-flipping puzzler. It's pretty tough and lacks the accessibility of *Zoo Keeper*, but in its own way it's just as engrossing.

18 VIEWTIFUL JOE: DOUBLE TROUBLE 81



CAPCOM
NGC/115

Capcom adapt *Joe* wonderfully for the DS, creating a clutch of well-considered new superpowers. Inventive superheroism of the highest order.

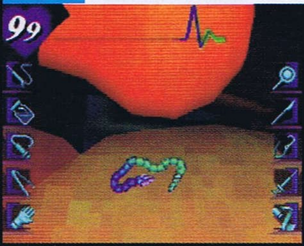
19 YOSHI'S TOUCH AND GO 80



NINTENDO
NGC/107

A game of two halves, literally: first, draw clouds to catch Baby Mario, then shoot eggs and draw platforms for Yoshi. Very moreish and well implemented.

20 TRAUMA CENTER 77



NINTENDO
NGC/118

Too fiddly and full of outrageous difficulty spikes to be a classic, but performing operations with the stylus is so original that it begs to be played.

AVOID!



ASPHALT URBAN GT
Astonishingly bad racer that handles like a stone cow, with a cretinous boost system that makes no sense whatsoever.

NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED
Greener described this as "hilariously inept", and that just about sums it up, justified nicely by a paltry 17% score.

MARVEL NEMESIS
A great cast of superheroes grace one of the worst fighting games we've ever seen. What a waste.

PING PALS
Basically Pictochat, but rubbish. And you get Pictochat free on your DS. Don't fall for this, kids.

BUBBLE BOBBLE REVOLUTION
A real shame, this, as it royally messes up the delicate balance of *Bubble Bobble*'s beauty. It made Martin cry.

FIVE FUTURE CLASSICS



METROID PRIME: HUNTERS
Should be out in America by now – with online multiplayer it may even topple *Mario Kart* as our multiplayer favourite.

TETRIS DS
A wealth of interesting modes plus online play, and 10-player wireless multiplay from just one cartridge.

BRAIN TRAINING
Out very shortly, this 'educational' bundle of minigames has been an enormous success in Japan.

NEW SUPER MARIO BROS
Nintendo reckon that this'll be the best 2D Mario ever. That's a bold claim – but who are we to disagree?

SUPER PRINCESS PEACH
A very pink, cute twist on *Mario*-style platforming. This is actually great.

THE NGC BACK PAGE QUIZ





Engorged your brain with **NGC** knowledge?
Then have a crack at this, if you can…

Do not go gentle into that good night, rage, rage against the dying of the light." Good old Dylan Thomas, eh? Of course, he was talking about old age and dying, but he could well have been writing about the end of this issue, which this page most certainly is, in a very literal sense (back cover excepted). So, in a last explosion of issue-ending fun, here's another quiz for you. Get all the questions right, and you could be one lucky winner of a DS Lite with a copy of *Metroid Hunters*, courtesy of some worryingly generous folk at Nintendo. Or you could win sweet Fanny Adams! It's like a metaphor for life, eh?

1. **"Horrendous difficulty spikes". Sounds painful, but to which game are we referring?**

2. **Flint-hearted fools expect their robots to have guns and not… what?**

3. **'The Chaq'. Madman or genius?**

4. **"The fate of Europe lies with…" who, exactly? (Clue: it's not Mario. Or Link. Or Samus.)**

5. **"Patois-spewing shambler". Who exactly are we talking about? (Clue: It's not Greener, although the description fits.)**

6. **"A bit of thwocky noise", said Kittsy. But was he expressing a desire for a specific aural experience, or talking about a game? And if it was a game, what game was it? Could this question be any longer? Evidence points to: yes. And look! Now it's even longer!**

7. **If you were close personal friends with NGC wordsmith Alex Cooke, would you call him:**
1) Big Gay Al
2) Ze Cookerino Grande, olé!
3) Christopher Tookey and Alex Cookey, sat up in a tree, K.I.S.S.I.N.G

8. **Which area in *Metroid* is home to the game's "most significant alterations"?**

9. **The Pevensie children: lovely kids, we're sure, but are they poshos or chavs?**

10. **"Punishingly serious and uncharismatic as…" who?**

Bonus Question: **Intelligent Design. Load of old cobblers or not?**

HOW TO ENTER

Entering is simpler than Kittsy after a night on the cider. Send your entry on a piece of paper in an envelope, or on a postcard, to:

Quizzy Bee, Quizzy Bee, Quizzy Quizzy Bee
NGC Magazine
Future Publishing
30 Monmouth St
Bath
BANES
BA1 2BW

THE RULES

1. Closing date for entries is 10th May 2006.
2. Employees of Future Publishing, their relatives and attic-bound mad Creole wives may not enter.
3. Madmartigan!
4. One nit, while I was slepping, a Grackler cam. And then a navre.
5. Solve my maze!

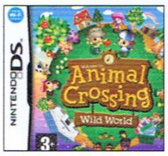





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28679 28679 EMBRACE Natures Law
29075 28826 FREEMASONS Watchin
29076 28827 GRAHAM COXON ....On My Own Again
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